Serge O questions Reyes on $41-M AFP deals

STORY ON PAGE A7

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2001 ★ 44 PAGES 4 SECTIONS VOL.17 NO. 12 ₱15

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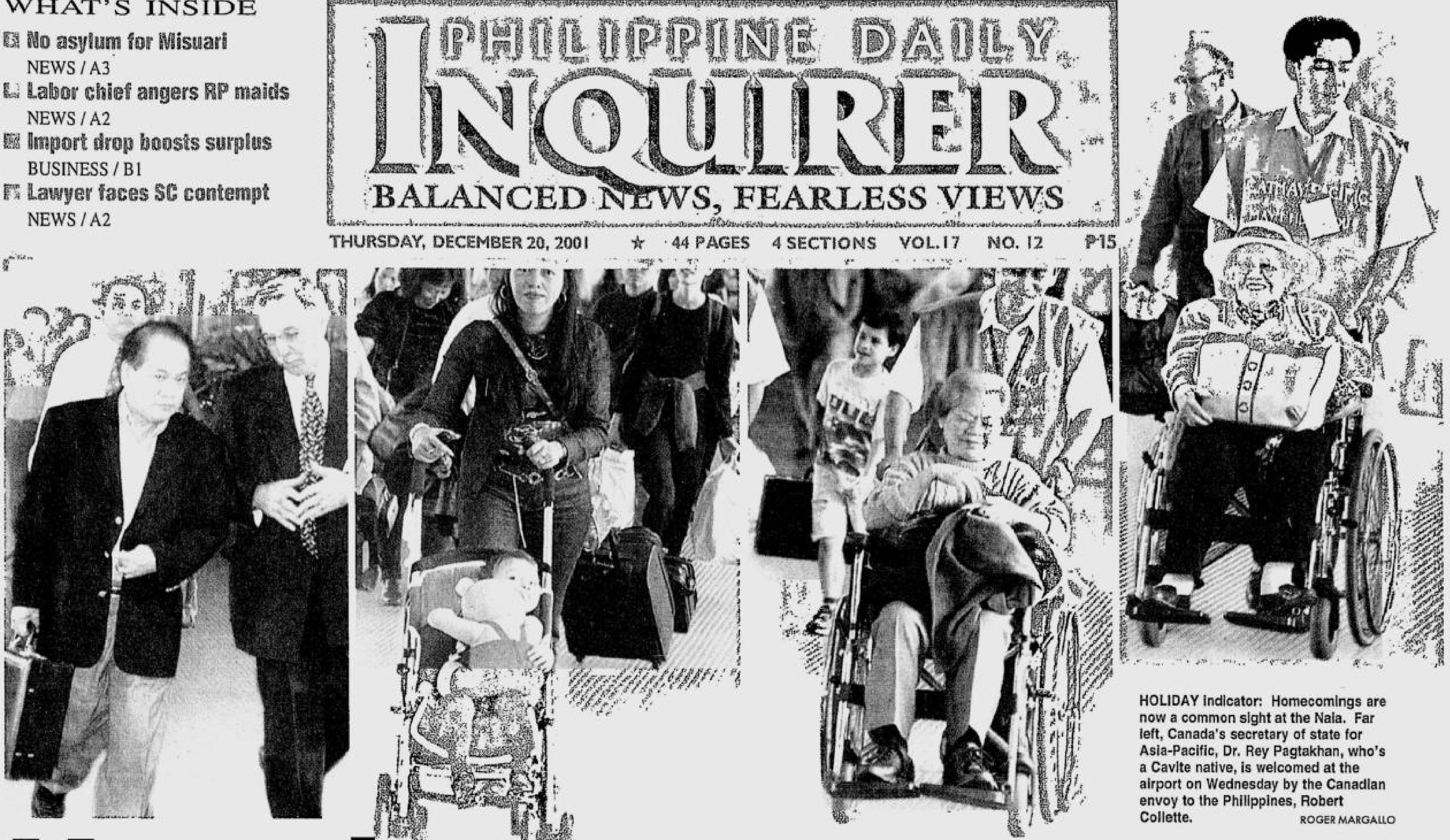


HOLIDAY Indicator: Homecomings are now a common sight at the Naia. Far left, Canada's secretary of state for Asia-Pacific, Dr. Rey Pagtakhan, who's a Cavite native, is welcomed at the airport on Wednesday by the Canadian envoy to the Philippines, Robert Collette. ROGER MARGALLO

No unity, no coco money

Interim agreement proposed to free funds

By Donna S. Cueto

GROUPS claiming the coco levy funds must enter into an "interim agreement" so that P700 million in dividends that the coco levy funds had earned from its 27-percent stake in San Miguel Corp. could be released, an official of the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) yesterday said.

PCGG Commissioner Victoria Avena said the interim agreement was not a compromise agreement.

"In the meantime, since everybody agrees that this (coco levy) is for the farmers, then why don't we use the (dividends), even just the interest earnings. Let's not touch the principal as its ownership is still being contested," Avena said.

She said there would be no legal obstacle to the interim formula "if everybody agrees (to it)," including the defendants in the coco levy cases pending before the Sandiganbayan.

But Avena said the anti-graft court must approve the interim agreement.

Malacañang wants to use the P700 million as a "price support fund" for coconut farmers starting next month.

Avena, who is in charge along with Commissioner Ruben Carranza of the PCGG's legal affairs, said the price support fund could only be "viable if there is an interim agreement."

"These dividends will not be unlocked, (unless there is an interim arrangement). Even if these are public funds, you cannot distribute them

NO UNITY/ A14

'Blasphemous' calendar irks Muslims

By Allan A. Nawal
PDI Mindanao Bureau

DAVAO CITY—Outraged Filipino Muslims want Mercury Drug Corp. to recall its new calendar and apologize for what they describe as a "blasphemous" statement.

Prof. Abhoud Syed Lingga, chair of the Bangsamoro People's Consultative Assembly (BPCA), said a caption in the 2002 coupon calendar issued by the giant drug chain particularly insulted the Islamic faith and the Bangsamoro as well.

According to Lingga, the calendar features photographs of famous tourist spots in the Philippines, including that of a mosque carrying the offensive caption: "Muslim Mosque; Islam Church where they worship Mohammed."

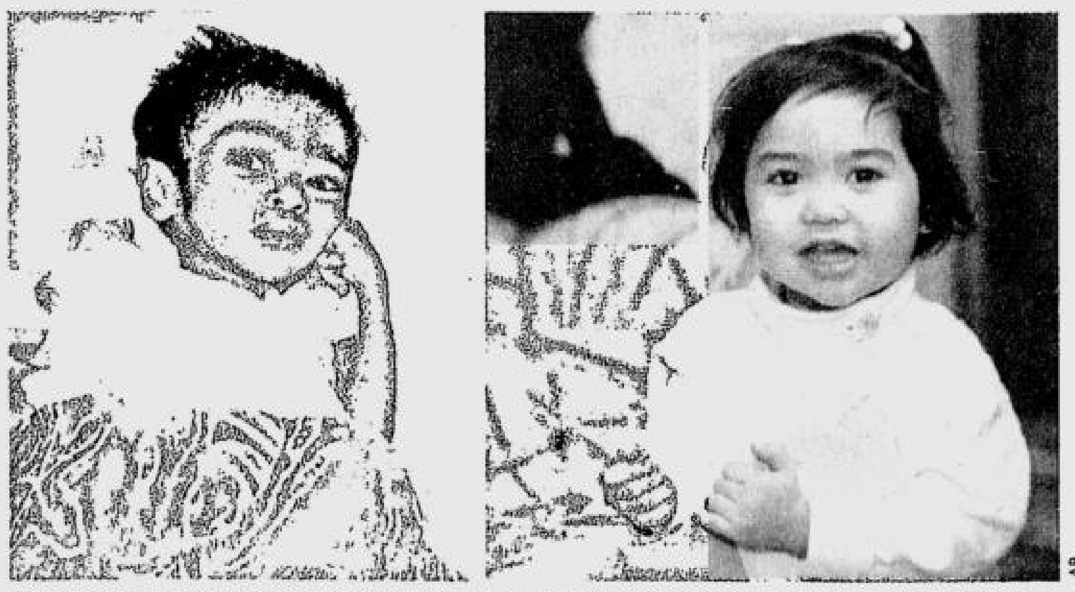
In an interview with the INQUIRER in Manila, Mario Marron, assistant vice president and spokesperson of Mercury Drug, said company president Vivian Que-Azcona yesterday wrote a letter of apology to Ustadz Abdulbaki Abubakr in Zamboanga City.

"We apologized to them and asked their advice on how we can rectify our error," Marron said.

"Muslims do not worship the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him," said Lingga, who is also executive director of the Bangsamoro Islamic Institute. "To say that Muslims worship him is blasphemous."

BLASPHEMOUS/ A15

Little Jeremaia proves power of prayer



AP

BEFORE leaving for Minneapolis via Northwest in March, 2000, a terminally ill Jeremaia weighed less than 5 kilos. After a liver transplant at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. Photo taken last month.

ROCHESTER, Minnesota—Little Jeremaia Matubis has recovered from her rare liver ailment and lives much like a normal kid today because there were enough good people in the Philippines and the United States who pooled resources to help her.

Early last year her family prayed to God for Jeremaia's recovery and a month later, people in the two countries started to make things happen.

After being contacted by Bridges Across the Atlantic about Jeremaia's case, Mayo Clinic officials called the Matubis family in the Philippines to say they might be able to help if the family could fly to Rochester.

The Chicago-based Bridges Across the Atlantic arranges for medical care for children in developing countries.

Jeremaia was desperately ill with biliary atresia, a liver disease wherein the ducts used to take bile from the organ are closed or absent. Doctors in the Philippines could not save her

LITTLE/ A11

'40-day celebration' for Edsa I and II

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

FOR the first time, Malacañang is preparing a "40-day celebration" to commemorate the revolts that unseated two Philippine presidents and came to be known as People Power I and II.

The Palace wants the celebration to cover the anniversaries of the uprisings that ousted President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 and President Joseph Estrada just last January. Since 1987, it has led the annual commemoration of People Power I every Feb. 23-25.

Next year's festivities will start on Jan. 16, which marks the beginning of People Power II, and last until Feb. 25, Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo said yesterday.

According to Romulo, who heads the Edsa Commission, outgoing Presidential Management Staff chief Vicky Garchitorena is overseeing the preparations for the celebration.

Garchitorena has quit her post at the PMS to return to the private sector. Her resignation is supposed to take effect at the end of the year.

Asked about this, Romulo said: "Well, we are asking her to (stay longer). Certainly she is helping us in the Edsa Commission. Whether officially or unofficially she will remain with us."

Romulo attributed the fresh rumors of an impending coup attempt to the approaching anniversary of People Power II.

"I suppose some mischievous characters would like to inject some

40-DAY/ A15

US Pinoys send home less dollars, balikbayan boxes

By Jennie L. Ilustre
Washington PDI correspondent

WASHINGTON—When America sneezes, it is said, Filipinos catch cold.

Now that the United States is in recession, what does this mean for the Philippines 11,000 miles away?

It means less money sent to families back home. It doesn't look good for the Philippine economy, either.

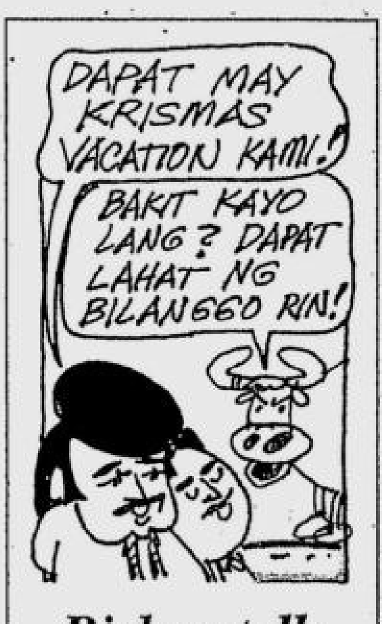
The US economic plunge has resulted in layoffs or loss of part-time jobs among Filipino domestic workers, seamen, and among those working in the hardest-hit tourism industry—airlines, hotels, restaurants, theaters and travel agencies.

There are about 3 million Filipino-Americans, land and sea-based overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), and illegal aliens—those who entered the US without proper documents. Majority toils in double jobs, or overtime, the better to send more money back home.

Of the total annual remittances—estimated at about $6 billion, about $4 billion—or a whopping 70 percent—come from the US.

Actual annual remittances are probably higher. The official figures reflect only bank-transmitted remittances. They don't include considerable cash sent regularly through Filipinos and citizens vis-

US/ A14



DAPAT MAY KRISMAS VACATION KAMI!
BAKIT KAYO LANG? DAPAT LAHAT NG BILANGGO RIN!

Bishop tells Erap: Accept reality

By Armand N. Nocum

ARCHBISHOP Oscar Cruz, former president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, has a piece of Christmas advice for deposed President Joseph Estrada: Accept reality.

"I am sad that up to this time, the former President has not yet understood what

BISHOP/ A14

Davide plays Santa, gets cheers, jeers

By Volt Contreras

SUPREME Court [illegible] Justice Hilario Davide Jr. played Santa to the members and staff of the country's anti-graft court on Tuesday, approving a late request for a special Christmas bonus.

Based on the terms of the request, however, the bonuses of the Sandiganbayan justices are earmarked for donations to civic and charitable projects.

On Dec. 18, acting Presiding Justice Minita Chico-Nazario wrote to Davide to ask for a temporary raise in the representation allowance granted to Sandiganbayan justices.

Nazario wrote: "In behalf of my colleagues in the Sandiganbayan, may I request for authority to augment our representation expense in view of the numerous requests by reason of our position for donations to various civic and charitable projects which are difficult to ignore during this season of sharing."

Davide approved the request on the same day.

A copy of the letter obtained by the INQUIRER yesterday bore Davide's initialed stamp of approval at the bottom and a handwritten note that pegged the amount granted the SB justices as follows:

DAVIDE/ A15

Second FRONT PAGE

KAPIT SA PATALIM!

Lawyer faces SC contempt

THE SUPREME Court has ordered lawyer Leonardo de Vera to explain why he should not be cited for "indirect contempt" for attempting to influence the high court's decision on the constitutionality of the plunder law last month.

In a full court resolution, the high court gave De Vera a "non-extendable" period of 10 days to reply.

The resolution stemmed from an administrative case initiated by the SC against De Vera for "alleged threats against the members of the court" and on "the contemptuous statements attributed (to him) concerning the plunder law case while the same was still pending before the Court."

De Vera's statements could be considered as indirect contempt of court unless he can come up with a "tenable" explanation, the court said.

De Vera issued the statements as president of the Equal Justice for All Movement (Ejas), which joined forces with civil society groups to press for the conviction for plunder of jailed ex-President Joseph Estrada. ***Michael Lim Ubac and Christian V. Esguerra***

Labor chief angers RP maids in HK

HONG KONG—Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas urged Hong Kong yesterday to preserve the minimum wage for thousands of Filipino maids here, but angered the workers by suggesting they might leave if salaries are cut too sharply.

"In the extreme, there's a possibility that we might say, 'OK, if you're not all that wanted in Hong Kong perhaps you should come home,'" Sto. Tomas told reporters before meeting with her Hong Kong counterpart.

Activists supporting the live-in maids called the comment highly irresponsible, saying the Filipino women have no realistic alternative to working long hours, six days a week keeping Hong Kong households clean.

"There are no jobs back home," said Connie Bragas-Regalado of the United Filipinos in Hong Kong. "The government has shown no sincerity to create jobs for the people at home."

If Hong Kong's 152,000 Filipino maids went back, the Philippines would lose a big chunk of its hard-currency income. Filipino workers in Hong Kong and elsewhere send home about US$7 billion annually, President Macapagal-Arroyo said recently.

Hong Kong slashed the maids' minimum monthly wage to HK$3,670 (US$471) from HK$3,860(US$495), during its last recession in 1999.

With the economy sinking again, many Hong Kong families claim they are having a hard time paying the maids.

The Hong Kong government is considering another wage cut of up to 21.6 percent and many maids fear they are about to be shortchanged again.

Sto. Tomas met behind closed doors with Hong Kong Secretary for Education and Manpower Fanny Law, as part of an effort involving other nations whose citizens work here as domestic helpers. There are also 66,000 Indonesian maids in Hong Kong and smaller numbers from Thailand, Nepal and Sri Lanka who would be affected.

"Given the kind of hours the domestic helpers have put in and the kind of pay they get, at the very least we hope the wages will not be cut," Sto. Tomas said afterward.

Sto. Tomas forwarded a letter from Ms Macapagal to Hong Kong's political leader, Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa, urging that the minimum wage stay unchanged.

Law told the Philippine labor secretary that Hong Kong is conducting an annual review of the wages but has "no preconceived ideas," said Raymond Tam, a spokesperson for the Education and Manpower Bureau.

The Indonesian consul general, Roastam Assandi, met later with Law and said he had voiced concerns about any salary cut.

A spokesperson for the Philippine consulate, Raly Tejada, said officials from Nepal, Thailand and Sri Lanka also raised the issue with Law yesterday, but neither Hong Kong officials nor the respective consulates could immediately confirm this.

Sto. Tomas disputed charges from activists that her visit was nothing more than a public relations exercise to appease the maids and their families at home who depend on money they send back.

"We're here to help them (Hong Kong officials) make a decision that is in favor of our workers," she said.

Bragas-Regalado said even if Hong Kong cuts the wages, most Filipinos will stay—typically living in rooms the size of closets in the back of their employers' apartments, which aren't too big, either, in many cases.

"There is no way to survive at home," she said.

The maids have enabled Hong Kong people enjoy a better quality of life, freeing up many wives and mothers to pursue work outside the home, Sto. Tomas said. ***AP***

House works to restore P8.5-B budget cut

THE HOUSE of Representatives last night moved to restore the cuts that the Senate had made on the proposed 2002 national budget.

"We will try to restore our version of the appropriations bill," Camarines Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya, chair of the House committee on appropriations.

The bicameral conference committee started meeting at 5 p.m. yesterday to come up with a reconciled version for ratification by both houses.

The legislature is under much pressure to pass the General Appropriations Act on this last week of its current session so President Macapagal-Arroyo can sign it into law before the year is over.

The Senate the other day slashed P8.5 billion from the P780.8 billion budget approved by the House last October.

House Majority Leader Neptali Gonzales II said the House would push for the approval of the entire P780.8 billion in the final version.

Even the House minority, which earlier threatened to question before the Supreme Court the legality of the budget's approval, is apparently agreeable to restoring the cuts.

"The consensus of the minority is that there should be no cuts in the budget because of the economic crisis," House Minority Leader Carlos Padilla told reporters.

Maguindanao Rep. Didagen Dilangalen, a member of the minority, said he would recommend that the minority drop its plan to go to the high court to question the legality of the House's approval of the budget after the session had adjourned on Oct. 25.

"It's for the national interest," Dilangalen said. ***Juliet Labog Avellana***

Solon assails Joe de V hand in Desierto vote

By C. Avendaño

SPEAKER Jose de Venecia showed an "unwarranted interest" in last Tuesday's controversial House vote on the impeachment complaint against Ombudsman Aniano Desierto.

This was the contention of Misamis Oriental Rep. Oscar Moreno who said yesterday that "out of *delicadeza*" (propriety), the speaker should have "distanced" himself from the proceedings which saw the House committee on justice junk the impeachment complaint filed by lawyer Ernesto Francisco Jr.

Moreno wondered why De Venecia deputized Isabela Rep. Rodolfo Albano to represent him in Tuesday's committee hearing, in which the panel refused to admit additional evidence against Desierto but moved quickly to vote on the complaint's sufficiency.

The committee voted down Francisco's complaint, 35 to 5. The complaint would now go before the 214 members of the House who would decide on its final fate in plenary session.

(The INQUIRER had earlier reported that Rep. Alipio Badelles was one of the 35 who voted "yes." Badelles, in fact, did not participate in the voting. The INQUIRER had erroneously put a check next to his name, instead of that of Rep. Douglas Cagas of Davao del Sur, to indicate a yes vote. The INQUIRER regrets the error.)

"There was unwarranted interest on the part of the speaker when he deputized Albano," Moreno said.

He said De Venecia's move was a "signal" to the other congressmen that the speaker was for Desierto.

"Whether or not they (congressmen) were swayed, I can only speculate," Moreno said.

Justice committee chair Rep. Marcelino Libanan (Eastern Samar) branded as "unfair" allegations that his panel had moved to stop Francisco from making his case against Desierto.

"It was a transparent proceeding," Libanan said, blaming Francisco for not including the additional evidence in the impeachment complaint he filed in November. ***With Nelson F. Flores and Dona Z. Pazzibugan***

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News that makes a difference

No asylum for Misuari

KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysia will not give captured Moro leader Nur Misuari political protection and will stand firm in its decision to deport him, a top Malaysian foreign ministry official said yesterday.

"As far as we are concerned, we don't recognize any request for political asylum or protection," he told Agence France Presse.

He was responding to Malaysian newspaper reports yesterday that a California-based lawyer had appealed to the Malaysian government to grant Misuari temporary protection pending an appeal to the United Nations for political asylum.

Ely Pamatong, who claimed to be a close associate of Misuari, sent a petition to Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad urging the government not to deport Misuari back to the Philippines.

Pamatong's letter, which was also sent to foreign embassies here, asked Malaysia to give Misuari temporary protection while the UN processed an appeal for asylum, possibly in a third country.

The foreign ministry official, who declined to be named, said he had yet to receive a copy of the petition.

"I have not seen the letter myself, but Malaysia's stand would remain the same, which is to send Misuari back to the Philippines," he said.

In Malacañang, presidential spokesperson Rigoberto Tiglao told reporters yesterday that the government was considering exile in Libya for Misuari to end the impasse over the former separatist guerrilla.

But he said there has been no official communication from the Libyan government on the issue.

Libya backed the Misuari-led Moro National Liberation Front's struggle for a separate Muslim state in Mindanao in the 1970s.

Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo said he was not aware of any plans to exile Misuari to a third country or of reports that Libya had offered to take Misuari.

"As far as I know, I think he will be returned here," Romulo said.

In a separate interview, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said Misuari would be returned in January.

"There's no confirmed offer from Libya. What we'll do with Misuari is to take him back within the first two weeks of January," he said.

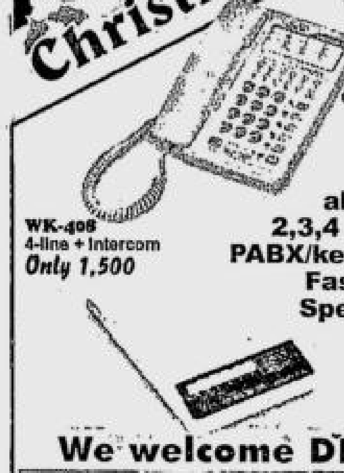
Golez, however, did not categorically rule out the option of exile.

Mahathir warned on Sunday that Malaysia would send the 60-year-old Misuari to a third country if the Philippine government did not take him back.

On Monday Ms Macapagal said she would make a decision on what to do about Misuari in January.

Her final decision hinges on her meeting with Indonesian Foreign Minister Dr. Nur Hassan Wirajuda who is arriving today.

Wirajuda chairs the Organization of Islamic Conference Committee of the Eight. *AFP with a report from Dona Pazzibugan*



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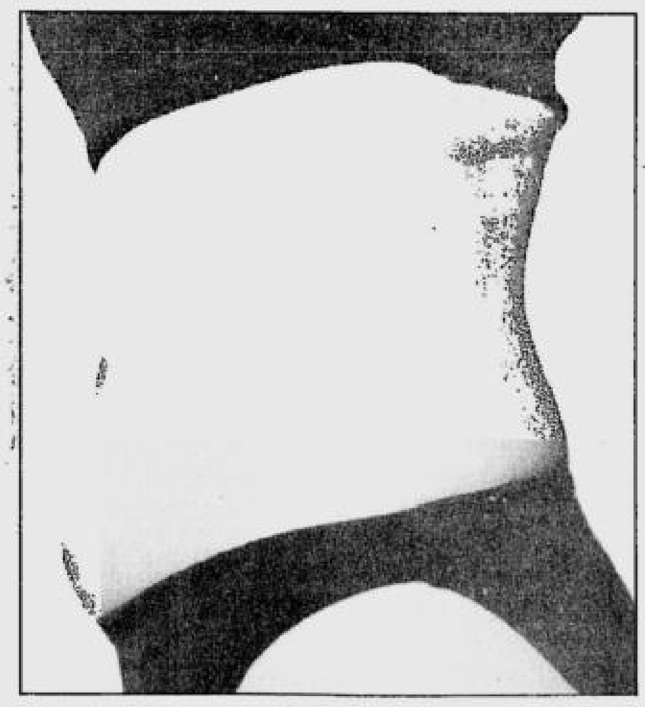

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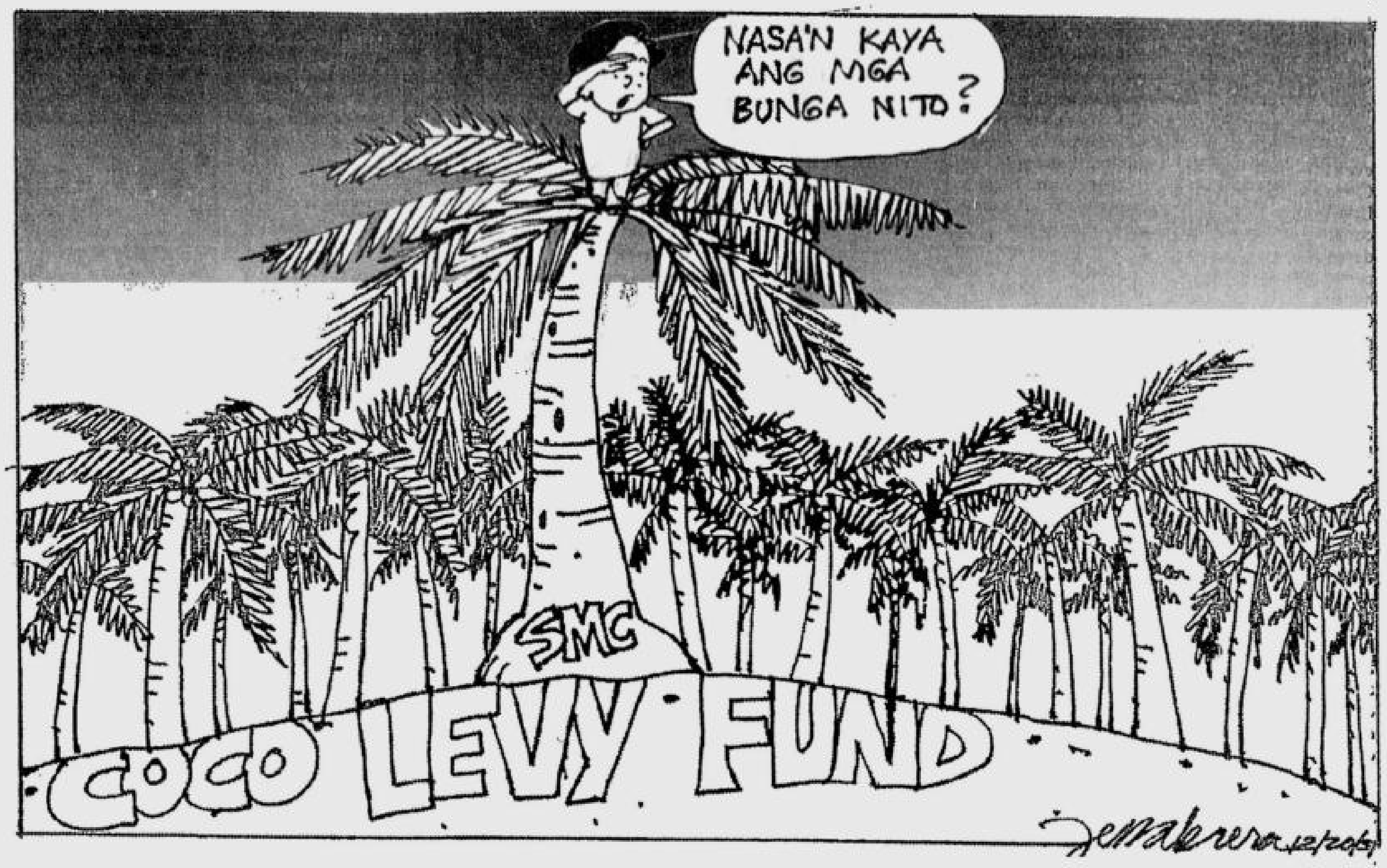

EDITORIALS

No end game yet

ONLY two months after the air strikes in Afghanistan, the United States-led forces have uprooted the Taliban government from Kabul and cornered it, together with the al-Qaida terrorists of Osama bin Laden, in Kandahar. The Taliban and al-Qaida are expected to make their last stand there. Of course, strictly speaking, they could resort to guerrilla tactics and launch mosquito attacks against the allied forces and the anti-Taliban Afghan forces. But their days as a fanatical Islamic state-terrorist complex are numbered.

The question is whether US President George W. Bush will achieve what has become a personal stake: the capture of Bin Laden. The leader of the al-Qaida is said to be holed up in the hills, valleys and caves of Tora Bora. Depending on the reliability of the intelligence reports, Bin Laden may or may not be seized. For Bush, as much as for the rest of the world, his capture will at least give psychological closure to the Sept. 11 episode. It will relieve the oppressiveness that the world has been feeling since it watched horrified and helplessly the World Trade Center collapse after suicide air attacks, sending 7,000 people to their dusty deaths.

But the fight against terrorism does not end with Bin Laden. The world must look beyond the most prominent terrorist in the world and make sure that his example will not be replicated elsewhere. To be sure, the Afghan campaign is merely the first phase of a strategy to constrict terrorism. It is just part of a drive to defang terrorism and undermine its "global reach." This is important since the al-Qaida has international affiliates, our own Abu Sayyaf among them.

That battle will not be as glamorous and telegenic as the Afghan military offensive. It will involve, for instance, freezing or seizing the assets of certain Islamic charities that act as fronts for terrorism.

The battle will also involve the identification of states that may have harbored terrorists but that must be lured or compelled to abandon them so as to become models of good behavior for other similarly inclined states. According to this tact, the United States may pursue a policy of rapprochement with Somalia, which has al-Qaida camps, and Sudan, which was Bin Laden's base before Afghanistan. Luring these countries into the net of anti-terrorism will make the world lonelier for Bin Laden and his bloody likes.

Afghan rescue

JUST as important in the global battle against terrorism is ensuring that Afghanistan rises from the tumult of its unfortunate romance with Islamic fanaticism and deadly terrorism. The world's neglect of Afghanistan left the country to its own devices, making it prone to the messianism of the Taliban and the wiles of Islamic terrorists.

The world must assist in hastening Afghanistan's social and economic reconstruction. If the healthy signs in Kabul are any indication, the Afghans are tired of the repression and demagoguery of the Taliban. The country seeks to become a modern state and a respectable member of the community of nations.

Rehabilitation entails certain costs. Its infrastructure nearly wiped out by the US-led bombing expeditions, and its economy driven to the ground by Taliban misrule and insularity, Afghanistan must be provided relief and assistance, a Marshall Plan of sorts that will enable it to have a fighting chance against the forces of darkness like the Taliban which seek to consign it to lotus-like oblivion and pariah-like notoriety.

But the biggest challenge is political. The world must unite the diverse—and often divisive—Afghan factions to a power-sharing interim government that will pave the way for a more solid governing system. Talks in Bonn have forged a workable though tenuous system in which some of the claims of the Pushtuns, the country's largest ethnic group, have been accommodated, while reassuring the Northern Alliance of minority Tajiks and Uzbeks that helped the Western forces in driving out the Taliban. Part of the compromise agreement is to have the former king, Mohammad Zahir Shah, convene the *loya iriga*, the tribal assembly, in six months to prepare the elections to determine which party will rule Afghanistan.

The path to social and political rehabilitation is thorny and tortuous. But Afghanistan must be helped to make the first step.

Montalban dump will pollute Metro's drinking water

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

BIO-TERRORISM, or biological warfare, is about to hit Metro Manila and its environs. It will be the handiwork not of Osama bin Laden or other terrorists. Ironically, it will be the handiwork of top Philippine officials, specifically President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Metro Manila Development Authority Chair Benjamin Abalos and Montalban Mayor Pedro Cuerpo. Because of their ignorance, gullibility, negligence and willful violation of our laws, residents of Metro Manila will be poisoned with toxic chemicals and disease-causing bacteria.

The world was terrorized with anthrax spores sent through the mail that infected and killed several persons. The bio-terrorism to be unleashed by our own officials will affect not only several persons but thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of people. Because it is our drinking water itself that will be the source of the poison and the diseases.

The new garbage dump being prepared in Lucutan Munti, Montalban, will pollute the La Mesa Dam reservoir, as well as the groundwater in Montalban and San Mateo where the people depend on deep wells, open wells and springs for their drinking water.

No less than President Macapagal herself visited the dump last October. She approved it immediately because she had just declared a "state of emergency" in Metro Manila due to the growing piles of uncollected garbage everywhere. The garbage was not being collected because there was no place in which to dump it. She was afraid an epidemic would break out. A dump was needed immediately, and here was Lucutan Munti in Montalban being offered by the town mayor.

What the President was not told was that Lucutan Munti, a low area, is crisscrossed by many creeks and tributaries of the Lucutan Munti River. In fact, the garbage dump will actually cover one small river.

What negligence! The bottom of the dump is actually a living river. This river flows to the Montalban River, San Mateo River, Marikina River and then to the Pasig River.

Moreover, the dump is located within the Marikina Valley fault line. Leachate from the garbage will easily seep down through this fault line and contaminate the underground water in Montalban and San Mateo. Residents of these two towns rely on wells for their drinking water.

Garbage leachate contains pathogenic bacteria that can cause communicable diseases. It also contains toxic metals like cadmium, chromium, lead and mercury that can cause poisoning, and cancer of the liver, bladder and kidneys. One can just imagine the tens of thousands of people who will contract diseases from the polluted water. Remember, this is not a sanitary landfill but only an open dump.

Three days after her visit, the President ordered the manager of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, which is the protector of the watershed, and the Engineering Brigade of the Armed forces of the Philippines to hack an access road through the forest inside the La Mesa Dam Water Reservation. The soldiers demolished the perimeter fence of the reservation and massacred thousands of trees. While ABS-CBN and the civilian population have embarked on a project to plant trees in the La Mesa Dam Reservation, the soldiers are cutting down thousands of big trees.

This access road to the Montalban dump will pass by the reservoir itself. There will be more than 2,000 truckloads of garbage and hazardous hospital wastes passing through this road every day. Spillagé of hazardous wastes cannot be avoided and this will contaminate the water in the reservoir with pathogenic bacteria. The drinking water of Metro Manila comes from this reservoir. Imagine the hundreds of thousands of people who will be infected by this water.

This is not mere speculation. A disaster of this nature actually happened in the capital city of Angola in Africa where, during the height of the tribal wars, the city government dumped its garbage in a deep ravine. When it rained, the leachate flowed to the City Water Reservoir. After two weeks, the entire city felt the effects of the garbage. An epidemic of cholera, dysentery and typhoid, all water-borne diseases, broke out. Toxic chemicals caused poisoning and cancer. The City Water Reservoir was closed. It is still closed until now, according to Rev. Fr. Efren de Guzman, a Filipino priest who was in Angola for more than 20 years managing a leprosarium.

If the Montalban dump is pushed through, what happened in Angola may happen here. The results may be even more horrible because Metro Manila has a much bigger population than Angola.

By dumping the trash of Metro Manila residents in Montalban, that trash will go back to them in the form of contaminated water. It fulfills the prophecy of the television commercial of Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit that "*Ang basurang iyong itinapon, sa inyo rin babalik* (The garbage that you dumped elsewhere will go back to you)."

Worse, the access road has made it very easy for terrorists to sabotage our nation. It would be easy for terrorists to throw poisonous chemicals or deadly bacteria into the reservoir as the garbage trucks pass by.

The President has taken an oath to protect the Constitution and enforce the laws of the land. But in approving just this one dump, she already violated a number of laws.

The dump is inside a watershed and violates the Nipas Act (National Integrated Protected Areas System) which protects watersheds. Garbage dumps cannot be located inside watersheds. It violates RA 9003, RA 705 and the Rizal Anti-Garbage/Waste Dumping Ordinance of 1996. It has no Environmental Compliance Certificate. No Environmental Impact Assessment was done. The people of Montalban are against it; in fact, they held a rally against it during the visit of the President.

So why did Mayor Cuerpo offer his municipality to be a garbage dump? In exchange for the equivalent of 30 pieces of silver, or P300 million. The mayor has already received P40 million of it.

This is tantamount to bribery, another violation of our laws.

No rest for the weary

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I THOUGHT Christmas would offer a respite not just from politicking but from politics itself, a subject even my friends have gotten a surfeit of. It's coming out of their ears, they say. But what happened in Congress the other day makes that vacation impossible. Some things you may not let pass, Christmas or no Christmas.

What happened the other day was that the congressmen turned into thugs. Yes, thugs. That is what you are when you gang up on someone and maul him, with the intent to rob or kill. You become a thug. That was what 35 congressmen became when they banded together to maul Ernesto Francisco, the lawyer who filed bribery charges against Ombudsman Aniano Desierto last October, and rob the citizens they represented of the need to right wrongs. Specifically, they voted 35 to 5 to declare Francisco's complaint "insufficient in substance," thereby killing it. That is at least what they think. But that is one corpse that will haunt them for a long, long time.

Francisco has tape recordings to show what most everyone has known all along. That the incumbent ombudsman is not part of the cure, he is part of the disease. The tape recordings show Desierto accepted P273,000 worth of camera parts and P500,000 in cash from businessman Luke Roxas in 1997 in exchange for sitting on a case involving his bank. How that can be "insufficient in substance," only the 35 congressmen can say. They have their own definitions of "sufficient" and "substance." They probably have their own definitions of "in."

I do not know if the 35 congressmen really exchanged winks, as observers subsequently charged, while thumbing down Francisco's complaint, which would have launched impeachment proceedings against Desierto. But whether so or not, that kind of vote, on a case where evidence is not lacking, where it indeed looks pretty damning, has vicious conspiracy written all over it. It is too long to list the names of the 35 congressmen here to remind the voters of whom not to vote for in 2004. We'll have that list when the time comes. Suffice it to remember at this point only the names of Eastern Samar Rep. Marcelino Libanan, the committee chair, and Isabela Rep. Rodolfo Albano who was acting on behalf of Speaker Jose de Venecia. They are the masterminds, or chief architects, of this plot.

From the other end, our heartfelt thanks go to the five heroic representatives who refused to go along with this outrage. They are Oscar Moreno (who we recall was also a pillar of the Erap impeachment trial, and which belies Desierto's suggestion the case against him was hatched by Erap's pals), Liza Masa (of Bayan Muna, also at the forefront of the struggle to impeach Erap last year), Lawrence Wacnang, Arthur Defensor and Ernie Dulalas Clarete. We thank them for reminding the voters—never mind their "colleagues," who are past reminding—what the position of "representative" means. It means representing the people, not themselves. Or it means representing lofty ideal, not scraggly greed.

"With the dismissal of the complaint," exulted Desierto, "the Ombudsman's Office will now, more than ever, prosecute the wrongdoers in the government. Now we can go on with the prosecution of deposed President Joseph Estrada."

Like how? How can the Office of the Ombudsman now, quite apart from more than ever, prosecute any wrongdoer in government? He has just added 35 more sacred cows to his list of untouchables. Or more than 35, all of De Venecia's devoted followers in Congress, which, to go by the way De Venecia reclaimed his speakership, is pretty much the bulk of it. How can Desierto now look askance at the transactions of Libanan and Albano? How can he see any irregularities in the Speaker's expenses to keep journalists happy? How can he see anything wrong in people who give every reason for their constituents to call them "*tong*-gressmen"?

Henceforth, Desierto will see only five corrupt people in Congress, and more than ever hound them. Guess who they are.

How Erap must be laughing his head off. If Erap hatched any plan at all, it would not have been to pin down Desierto but to get him off the hook. Desierto is Erap's best guarantee the cases against him will never prosper, a tormentor bereft of any credibility, apart from talent. So long as Desierto is there, so long will Erap enjoy the comfort of freedom, or the freedom of comfort, such as the commodious surroundings of the Veterans Memorial Medical Hospital allow. Gout will be the only thing to torment him.

Some days ago, a friend of mine called to say she and several others were keeping vigil in Congress because they had been warned that the congressmen were going to make Francisco's case against Desierto disappear. I said that if they did that, they would have the cover of Christmas to hide this dark deed. This was a season of magic, aided in no small way by Harry Potter mania, and not all magicians were the benign kind. Some were the black kind, whose hearts and minds curdled at the thought of justice and decency thriving in this world. They would have the public's self-declared truce on politics, if not aversion to it, during the holidays to help them do it.

Well, they've done it. But this isn't over. Not by a long mile. Let them have their ho-ho-ho's over the next couple of weeks—that is all they will have. At the very least, Francisco and friends still have one legal recourse. The committee will have to report its findings to a plenary session of Congress, which has 10 session days to deliberate on it. At the very most, they still have a moral recourse, which is the court of public opinion. I recall that last year, Erap's hordes were also confident they had the numbers in the Senate, which would enable them to thwart any move to oust him. By the third week of January, Erap was gone.

Hell hath no fury like Filipinos coming out of Christmas.

* * *

Comments are welcome at dequiros@vasia.com

Minus voting provision, Kirin deal OK to PCGG

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THE CONTINUING budget hearings at the Senate confirmed the old adage that in politics there are no permanent enemies or friends, only temporary alliances. Recall that Sen. John Osmeña had earlier noisily objected to the appointment of Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho because the latter allegedly was ignoring his complaints against a customs official in Cebu whom he accused of tolerating rampant smuggling especially of rice in the Cebu port. Osmeña even threatened to bolt the administration coalition if Camacho failed to do something about this official. Last Tuesday, however, Osmeña, as chair of the finance committee that is sponsoring the national budget, was defending the finance department's budget amid persistent interpellations by minority senators, notably his cousin Sen. Serge Osmeña. It was mainly an Osmeña vs. Osmeña show. And guess who was prompting John O with answers during the nearly two-hour interpellation? Camacho.

* * *

The President appears to be in a bind over the proposed purchase of 15 percent of San Miguel Corp. by the largest Japanese beer firm, Kirin. She doubtless realizes the public protest against the continued dominance of Eduardo Cojuangco's group in SMC and other assets purchased with coco levy funds. On the other hand, GMA also wants the Kirin buy-in as it is expected to bring in some P27 billion in investment. This is viewed as the cornerstone event when Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi comes to Manila for a 24-hour visit on Jan. 9. But the way it's turning out, it's now being viewed as a conflict between foreign investments and good governance, when it doesn't have to be that way, if only there were more transparency and respect for correct procedure.

* * *

What seems to upset many people about the Kirin deal is the talk of a voting trust agreement struck between the Cojuangco camp and Kirin, which would put the Japanese company's 15 percent together with the 20 percent that Cojuangco claims to be his "personal" shares in SMC, for a total of 35 percent. If critics are to be believed, he would control this huge bloc without having spent a single centavo. What bothers people is that the Kirin deal was cooked up in utmost secrecy without the PCGG being consulted. The question being asked is, was there a voting trust agreement? This appears to be the bone in the throat, since without it the Kirin deal appears acceptable even to the PCGG.

Apparently this deal was being negotiated at about the same time that GMA publicist Dante Ang was talking to Cojuangco's group about a "settlement" of the 27 percent sequestered SMC shares that would unlock them for the farmers in the "interim." As Sen. Joker Arroyo put it, the PCGG was the last to know, and in fact up to now it has no copy of that supposed agreement. He opined that the seven government representatives in the SMC board—the five nominated by deposed President Estrada who up to now sit in the board by sheer technicality, and the two representatives from the SSS and the GSIS—did not report the Kirin deal to their principal, the government. For this, he said, they ought to be charged in court for dereliction of duty.

* * *

The PCGG seems to have a history of being left out of deals. During the time of the first PCGG chair, Jovito Salonga, he threatened to resign five times especially during the secret negotiations involving Michael de Guzman, Jose Almonte and Peping Cojuangco over "Operation Big Bird," when he felt they were going over his head. PCGG Chair Haydee Yorac is a no-nonsense woman who will call a spade a spade, and those working closely with her, such as Solicitor General Simeon Marcelo and her commissioners, Ruben Carranza, Victoria Avena and Jorge Sarmiento, share her credibility and independence. It would be best for the administration, to whose credit these high-caliber people were chosen, to work with them instead of at cross purposes.

* * *

Doubtless citizens, especially lawyers, read with interest the recent statement of Sen. Edgardo Angara that what the Accra lawyers, beginning with himself, did for Cojuangco in the mid-1970s and early 1980s in terms of packaging the coconut levy deals was merely "rendering legal services or as part of lawyering." A statement published in this newspaper yesterday from Accralaw, signed by managing partner Victor P. Lazatin, affirmed Angara's statement. Lazatin stressed: "The action and conduct of Accralaw and its lawyers are not only lawful and moral, but in full accord with the ethical standards of the legal profession."

To my mind, however, every time a lawyer does something for a client, that is "lawyering." Indeed Accra lawyers such as Angara, Teodoro Regala, Victor Lazatin and Jose Concepcion, who were the most assiduous in servicing the Cojuangco interests in those years (sources at the Office of the Solicitor General point out that then Accra lawyer Raul Roco was servicing the Soriano interests that sold out to Cojuangco, while Franklin Drilon was involved mainly in labor disputes), were lawyering for him. But the issue here is, for what purpose did they provide such services. It is said that lawyering can mean two things: either they teach their client to abide by the law, or they teach them to circumvent the law with their legal skills and maneuvers. What kind of lawyering did the Accra lawyers do for Cojuangco et al.?

* * *

The way the Accra lawyers concealed the real ownership of the levy funds beneath layers of companies and inter-locking directorates, it appears that they were using the second kind of "lawyering." For instance, the layering is shown by the fact that the purchase of 27 percent of SMC shares with coco levy funds was packaged in such a way that the shares appeared to be owned by 14 holding companies. These 14 companies were wholly owned subsidiaries of the so-called CIIF Companies, which, in turn, consisted of six separate oil companies. If there was no intention to conceal their rightful ownership, what was the purpose of so much elaborate layering?

The Accra lawyers, pressed to reveal what they know about the coco levy packaging, have invoked confidential relationship between client and lawyer, adding that they couldn't reveal their clients' names without their consent. The Supreme Court, under then Chief Justice Andres Narvasa, upheld their claim when the PCGG challenged this claim in September 1996. In reality it becomes a matter of conscience and judgment, but perhaps it's high time the Accra lawyers, who represented some of the best legal minds at that time, spoke up and revealed all about the coco levy issue.

One foot in the grave

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

"A WOMAN who gives birth has one foot in the grave," is a common saying. Childbirth is as old as humanity and for as long women have been putting their lives at risk each time they give birth. That's something we prefer to push out of our minds these days, but even in the most developed countries, childbirth was considered a life-threatening procedure for women in the years before World War II.

Today, procedures and routines have been developed to make maternity less of a risk to the life and health of both mother and child. But the reality remains that, due to many factors, many women and their babies still die from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.

In the Philippines, 10 women die each day (or every 24 hours) due to maternity-related causes. The most common reasons for maternal mortality are infection, postpartum hemorrhage and hypertension—the three direct causes of death during delivery—and abortion, or the consequences arising from unsafe procedures.

It must be made clear, though, that the vast majority of women survive their deliveries, and that with good pre-natal care and delivery in the hands of a competent attendant (a doctor, nurse, midwife, or even a trained and experienced *hilot*) a woman need not fear for her life when she gives birth. Still, complications do arise, and this is where the balance between survival and death may tilt.

* * *

ONE oft-cited reason for the death of a woman during delivery is that she wasn't brought to a hospital or other facility in time to deal with complications during the birth, such as a "breech" delivery, eclampsia (hypertension), or heavy bleeding. With two-thirds of all births still taking place at home with only relatives or a *hilot* in attendance, it's no wonder maternal deaths are so common and occur so frequently.

Even if the *hilot* were trained or experienced enough to spot signs of danger, such as swelling and spotting, the challenge to bring the woman to a faraway hospital or clinic in time through bad roads and with only rudimentary transportation is nearly insurmountable. We're all familiar, of course, with that cliché dramatic moment in local films, when a pregnant woman, blood dripping ominously down her legs, staggers out of the house, screaming for help. (What's with pregnant women in the movies anyway, that they never seem to know when it's their time to give birth?) Well, maybe the cliché is only a reflection of reality.

Anyway, one of the strategies employed by the health department to reduce maternal deaths has been to build birthing homes within the compounds of government hospitals. The homes are meant to house high-risk women in the last few days before their delivery, so they can receive competent medical care while giving birth. The homes also allow the woman to bring her family with her, receiving both practical and moral support during those days of high anxiety.

The trouble is, said Dory Raterta, executive director of the Family Planning Organization of the Philippines, the staffs of some hospitals where birthing homes have been built don't know (or appreciate) what they're for and don't tell their clients about them.

* * *

MOVING around the country in the course of a project on Women's Health and Safe Motherhood, Raterta spotted some birthing homes being used as quarters by hospital staff and doctors, as temporary offices, and even as storage rooms.

And with hardly any effort expended to inform village midwives and *hilots*, or even community leaders, about the birthing homes, women continue to die while giving birth even as resources meant to save their lives are being put to waste.

One wonders if such neglect and indifference would be tolerated if the primary victims were not poor, powerless women and their children.

This isn't the only example of how government programs contradict the ends they are supposed to serve.

While health policies and programs have targeted the reduction of the incidence of maternal mortality, one of the highest in the region, other policies work against this goal. For instance, according to an FPOP study, policies covering the bureaucracy discriminate against single mothers. The GSIS law, for instance, says that only married women members may claim maternity benefits. Civil Service Commission rules likewise provide maternity benefits only to women who are legally married. Single government employees who get pregnant are even constrained from admitting their pregnancy or seeking counseling and care, as they may be dismissed for immoral conduct.

* * *

AT THIS time of year, the central event and story for all Christians is of a birth, the birth of a child borne by a mother who got pregnant out of wedlock and in a place unfit for human habitation.

In this perhaps the Nativity story parallels the birthing story of so many Filipino women, who may be said to have "no room" at the inns of modern and efficient medical care when they need it most.

In less than a week, we will be celebrating the birth of this child, born against all odds, whose life was under threat from its very beginning. Perhaps it's time we began to transform our fascination for the birth of the Christ child into a devotion to the welfare of so many more infants and concern for the survival of the women who bear them.

I can only recall the story told by former Sen. Leticia Ramos-Shahani of how, after she delivered a privilege speech on safe motherhood at the Senate, her male colleagues began to interpellate her on the need for "safe fatherhood." The men found it amusing, but she found nothing laughable about trivializing an issue that's been responsible for the needless deaths of so many women. And neither should we.

'Makaraos' Christmas

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

AND so it came to pass...that Christmas has become a most cruel season. It excludes more than it includes. This is the time people feel worse than worst when they are at their worst. Meaning, the season aggravates whatever it is they are already suffering from. The poor feel poorest, the hungry feel hungriest, the lonely feel loneliest, the sad feel saddest, the abandoned feel like abandoning the world. Wounds bleed. Ask the rejected, the betrayed, the bereaved.

This is because the Christmas season is supposed to be a season of joy and peace and plenty (?) and togetherness and sharing and reaching out. You don't have one or all of the above during Christmas, you're out, eat the dust. You don't have all of them during Lent, you don't feel as bad. Holy Week and Easter are more soothing to the worn-out and weary.

And so in trying to make it all happen so that Christmas would turn out to be "happy," people pay the price with their health. Ask Rina Jimenez-David upstairs who has had for two successive years what she calls the "Christmas syndrome," which is something like a heart attack but which, thank God, is not. I think it should be called the "Christmas rush syndrome" to differentiate it from the Christmas blues of the depressives and those who suffer from the winter-induced seasonal affective disorder in snow countries.

People who have the means and power to make it all happen—that is, the trappings of joy and peace and plenty—live it up, even to the point of flaunting it. Yeah, come partake of my table. But that is as far as the stomach goes. The stomach could be easily filled. Not the other voids.

What do you say to the INQUIRER's "Youngblood" contributors who wrote the pieces titled "Abandoned" and "Christmas in May"? I wanted to gather them in my arms and tell them how courageous they have been, how strong, how special. Young as they are. How I wish I could pin Christmas stars on them, for surviving their difficult growing-up years and the Christmases-past, for bravely living with their all-consuming longing and loss. This, I want to say to them: Hold on, "for joy comes in the morning."

The media help dictate the ingredients of a happy Christmas. They conjure up images of what it should be: tables groaning with food, good looks, well-lit homes, gifts galore, complete families. If that is what it is, a happy Christmas seems to be beyond the reach of many.

The standard of what a happy Christmas should be has become so prohibitive in the mind of the brainwashed. It is partly their fault that they feel morose when they can't have all the ingredients that they believe should be there for a Christmas to be really joyful.

And so you hear people sigh in the wake of the Christmas season, "*Hay, nakaraos din.*" Like, by the grace of God, they survived it. Like it was such a hurdle. But indeed it is a hurdle for those who think they could hardly measure up.

Nakaraos. They survived the shopping rush in the malls and bazaars, the snarled traffic, preparing for the guests and the reunions, making both ends meet and most of all, the emptiness. They even survived the horrendous, distracted crowd in church and the priest's recycled homilies.

How has it come to this? Where has the real Christmas gone? Someone should start a "Christmas Movement" that would encourage people to go back to where Christmas all began, to unlock the simplicity that it stood for and the joy that included all. The way the Muslims celebrate Hariraya would put Christians to shame.

I know people who are trying to have an "alternative Christmas" by doing away with the excessive external trimmings and carousing that daunt those who can't keep up, by making quiet efforts to really reach out to those who are in pain or are extremely needy, not just during the Christmas season but beyond it.

Come to think of it, why call it "alternative" when that is what Christmas is supposed to be—a giving season? Not a mindless exchange-gifts season but a giving season. Not just among family, friends, colleagues and pesky gift collectors at the gate but with families who need a real boost in order to cross the poverty line.

A good friend of mine sends simple cards every year to tell her friends that the money for gifts she intended to send us has instead been channeled to a needy community. A representative of the community co-signs the card to validate her message and to give thanks.

* * *

A wondrous Christmas I remember. One of the happiest Christmases I had as an adult was spent in a special place with very special people, in an atmosphere of simplicity and prayer. I remember the feel of the mountain air and the soft scent of the pine that wafted into my soul.

The December flowers were in full bloom, the hills were green and throbbing with life. The stars were out the night we gathered around the manger to sing hymns and the sun rose gently from behind the hills on Christmas morning. The quiet and the peace overwhelmed me in a way I could not explain. I was filled with awe and wonderment.

I had experienced community—and communion. This is indeed Christmas, I thought, as I pondered the beauty of its simplicity, as I gazed at the people I had come to love and cherish until today.

But that was long ago and far away and there would not be another Christmas like that again.

* * *

This Christmas, may you experience enormous love and peace in the depth of your hearts. And may these translate into genuine joy—and a will to commune and share.

Partner and best friend

YOUNGBLOOD

Anne Lan Kagahastian-Candelaria

*We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—**Ed.***

I SELDOM cry. But during those rare moments when tears roll down my cheeks, I really miss my dad and how I wish he were near me, giving me a warm embrace and telling me everything would be fine.

When I was young, I often got into fistfights with the boys in school. I never considered being a girl to be a weakness. I could not stand being teased about being daddy's girl and having a weakling and a nerd for a brother. I didn't think twice about fighting boys of any size or any age. But whenever that happened, my dad would tell me that there were other ways of fighting for what I believed was right. He also taught me the value of discipline and patience and especially how to fight by using my head and not letting my bruised ego rule my behavior.

My dad was my best friend, my constant companion. I adored him as much as he adored me, his *unica hija*, his favorite girl. I was his best friend and his constant companion. We were like Batman and Robin, the dynamic duo.

We kept little secrets between us. When my mom thought he had stopped smoking, little did she know that I kept dad constantly supplied with cigarettes by going to the little grocery store after school and hiding the sticks in my pocket until my dad arrived from work.

He spent a lot of time telling stories about the war and how hard life was for him and his siblings as well as for my grandparents. He recalled that he used to slip some medicine and food for my grandfather into the church tower where he was imprisoned by the Japanese.

He also told funny stories about their childhood and never failed to note how simple life was during his youth.

His favorite story, as well as mine, was about his Kuya who dreamed of going to America, the land of his dreams. My uncle was only a teenager when he heard some interesting stories about America. Getting tired of daydreaming, he packed his clothes one day and bought with his savings a sackful of *pan de sal* for his *baon*. He went to the pier and waited for a big ship to arrive and bring him to America.

Dusk came but no ship arrived. Meanwhile, my poor grandmother was searching all over town for him. When he went home that night, she asked him where he had gone and what he was doing with the sackful of *pan de sal* he was carrying on his shoulders. When my uncle explained, she sat in a corner and had a good laugh. My uncle arrived in America a good 40 years later, but he took an airplane to get there.

I wish I could remember all those days my dad and I were together. But I cannot.

My partner fell ill when I was just 11. I was too young then to understand what cancer was and how it sucked the light out of a person. I saw my dad fight for his life for eight months from the time the doctor said he had bone cancer.

From day one, I knew something was wrong with him. He could not get out of bed without my mom's help. He could not eat breakfast downstairs with me and my brothers.

Then one day, an ambulance came and took away my dad, leaving my brothers and me empty, afraid and confused. My mom had to go watch over him and we were left in the care of a trusted family friend since it was still school time.

When the school year was over, we went to the city and straight to my dad's hospital bed. I still remember how he looked the first time I saw him there. He seemed so frail, so thin, so helpless.

But I did not cry. I looked at him and searched for those bright eyes and the warm smile that I had missed so much. I embraced him tightly, thinking that if I don't let go maybe, just maybe, he won't go away too.

I was wrong. Sixteen days before Christmas, my best friend, my partner, my dad, quietly passed away while my mom held his hand and tried her best to comfort him until his last and final minute here on earth. After eight long months of battling with a disease that was too strong for his frail body, he humbly bowed his head and prayed to God to take care of his wife, and his three little children. At peace with himself, he held my mom's hand for one last time and went to his eternal rest.

His funeral was held on a really beautiful day—a fine day for flying a kite, or for going on a picnic. On such a fine day, I said goodbye to my dad, my lifetime partner and best friend.

Again I did not cry. I acted like a brave little girl beside my mom, who was thin, pale and tired after eight months of sleepless nights caring for a wonderful husband and a loving father.

Fourteen years have passed since that day. And I have learned to value even more the short yet enlightening years I had spent with my dad. There were days when I badly needed his advice but I knew I would have to figure things out by myself. There were many times when I really wanted to stand beside him and hold his hand: when I graduated as salutatorian from grade school and high school; when I passed the Ateneo entrance exam; when I got a full scholarship grant from the university; when I turned 18; when I graduated from college with honors; when I got married; when I had my first son; when I had my second son; when I earned my master's; when I bought a house. I know he would have been very proud of me and what I have become. But there is no hand to hold.

I often wonder what it feels like to be in the shoes of my dad. His wisdom and patience I envy and his compassion for others I respect. I try to be him, but there will always be one dad for me. He may not have lived as long as other dads but I am grateful that he lived long enough for me to know him well and I thank God for sending him into my life during those times when I needed him most.

As I pay tribute to my partner and best friend, I cry not because of sadness or loss, but because I know I have become the person he wanted me to be. I cry because my tears are his tears and his spirit forever burns in my heart.

Anne Lan Kagahastian-Candelaria, 26, has a master's degree in political science from the Ateneo de Manila University and works with the Ateneo Center for Educational Development. She dreams of putting up a foundation for the benefit of public elementary schoolchildren in honor of her dad.

THEY SAID

Not in the mood

"I am not exactly celebrating because I know the difficulty and the challenges of the position."

—Newly proclaimed Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Gov. Parouk Hussin

Citizenship

"You cannot be a citizen of convenience."

—Senate President Franklin Drilon on businessman Pacifico Marcelo who insists he renounced his American citizenship but admits to using an American passport for "convenience"

Conduct unbecoming

"If you do not want to shed your high position, then you should not appear as counsel."

—Sandiganbayan Justice Teresita Leonardo de Castro to defense lawyer Serafin Cuevas, a former Supreme Court justice

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Drilon's info on SMC shares hearsay

LETTERS

ANENT your banner story last Dec. 13, please allow me to acquaint your readers about my knowledge of and involvement in the coconut levy funds issue.

In 1974, I joined the Accra Law Offices to head the firm's Labor Group practice, and left when I joined the Aquino Cabinet in August 1986. Practice of law in Accra was compartmentalized according to fields of specialization, and lawyers were then assigned to specific fields of law practice such as corporate, litigation, labor, tax, etc. Labor Law was my field of specialization.

As a matter of corporate practice, clients of the firm would now and then request lawyers to act as incorporators and nominees in holding companies that clients would establish. This was the case of the holding companies formed to acquire the San Miguel Corp. shares in the 1980s. As reported in the INQUIRER, Education Secretary Raul Roco "represented and arranged for the creation of 14 holding companies where the San Miguel shares bought by CIIF were held."

Thus, I had no personal knowledge or participation whatsoever in the acquisition of SMC shares, except to act as a nominee and incorporator in one of the holding companies. If I recall correctly, this company was called the First Meridian Development.

I was not the partner in charge of the Danding Cojuangco accounts in Accra, and therefore had no personal knowledge of how the so-called CIIF companies or the coconut levy funds were managed. Whatever information I have about this transaction is purely hearsay.

In fact, I was never impleaded in any of the cases filed in relation to the SMC acquisition.

As a matter of practice, the shares in the First Meridian Development were endorsed in blank after incorporation.

That was the last time I heard of this matter.—**FRANKLIN M. DRILON, Senate president, 6th Floor, Senate of the Philippines, GSIS Bldg., Financial Center, Pasay City**

Gifts that keep giving

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

THE OTHER day I was picking up something at the hardware in a shopping center when suddenly a man began shouting at a vendor in the corridor. He accused the vendor of having raised her voice at him and just went on and on, silencing the vendor every time she tried to explain her side. Finally, he hollered, in Tagalog, "I have the money. I am the customer. You keep quiet."

The hardware sales clerk sighed and told me it wasn't the first such incident. Tempers flare all the time during this Christmas shopping season.

I got my package and thanked her saying, "*Salamat, Meri Krismas.*" She returned the "*Meri Krismas*" with an ever so slight tinge of sarcasm.

It is ridiculous how the rituals of gift-giving have degenerated into such a painful chore. Shopping has become even more of an ordeal with our overcrowded shopping centers, the managers cramming in as many concessionaires as they can into the tiniest spaces, without thinking of crowd-control measures and fire prevention.

The irony, too is that despite all the shopping centers and *tiangge* stalls, I actually found it more difficult to find gifts this year. Much of the stuff isn't of very good quality and the prices aren't always that good.

I did find some alternative gifts that don't feed into commercialism and thought I should share the sources. These are gifts that go to a good cause. You'll still have to battle the traffic to get these gifts but at least you won't have to fight the crowds while picking out your stuff:

UNAC (436-0706, 925-4772), out at UP Village, offers Pasko Packs, composed of local food and beverage products arranged in a handcrafted basket and wrapped with burlap and raffia. All the products come from non-government organizations and people's organizations.

There's a gourmet pack for P675 with Gouda cheese from Misamis Oriental (I've tried the cheese and can say it's almost as good as the original Dutch version), a cheeseboard made by the Tahanang Walang Hagdanan, *duhat* wine from Pangasinan, *balaw-balaw* from Pampanga and herring sardines from Dipolog.

A rain forest pack costs P900 and has coffee from Bukidnon, *muscovado* sugar from Antique, *calamansi* concentrate from Mindoro, *sinamak* vinegar from Bacolod, herring sardines from Dipolog, cacao from South Cotabato, jams from Nueva Vizcaya, *laing* from Antipolo, *duhat* wine from Pangasinan and peanut butter from Bicol.

In an earlier column I mentioned Jesuit Communications (Tel. No. 426-5971 and 426-5926) at the Ateneo de Manila's Loyola Heights campus. They have two Christmas compact discs: "A Lauds Christmas" and "Matins," both instrumental in the style the Jesuit music ministry has become known for. They also have a 2002 Jesuit Calendar which focuses on St. Francis Xavier; the product is unique in that it also has the Chinese lunar calendar dates. They have other products like books, audiocassettes and videotapes. (There's one video I liked in particular, called "Ha Ha Popi," which explains the attempts to integrate Chinese and Filipino religious beliefs.)

Another compact disc you can get as a gift is "Bukod Tangi," this one is from the UP Office for Initiatives in Culture and the Arts (OICA, 928-1928). "Bukod Tangi" is a VCD featuring UP's chorale groups—Madrigal Singers, UP Concert Chorus and UP Singing Ambassadors—performing a mix of local and foreign songs with several of UP Diliman's well-known landmarks as background, for example, the Carillon and the Sunken Gardens. At P200 each, it's a real bargain but be warned: if you give it to UP alumni who are leaving overseas, it's bound to bring out a bit of sad nostalgia.

Finally, there's I Can Serve, a foundation working with people who have breast cancer. To raise money to help subsidize breast cancer patients at the Philippine General Hospital, I Can Serve is selling an all-occasion greeting card at P100, two bromeliads (the ones that look like birds of paradise, they emphasize, and not the pineapple-type) in a basket that you can turn into a magazine rack for P400, and one bromeliad in a pot for P200. Call 687-2543 or e-mail icanserve@yahoo.com for more information.

I should say you don't need to go to NGOs or universities for alternative gifts. There are two gifts which are "causes" in their own right: books because they're gifts you keep opening, and plants, because they're gifts that keep growing.

Despite the economic crisis, publishers like Anvil have continued to print new books written by Filipinos and I feel it's important to support them. Bench, incidentally, has also gotten into the act, publishing a wildly colorful and entertaining "Pinoy Pop Culture" by Gilda Cordero-Fernando and M. G. Chaves. Just to show you I'm not biased for local publications, there are two very affordable imports I'd recommend. Newsweek has a special, "Living Longer, Living Better" issue that's packed with information about a healthier lifestyle for older people. Another best buy is a home edition of the Merck Manual of Medical Information. Until we can do a Filipino adaptation, I'd recommend this manual for every household.

As for plants, I notice there's a much wider selection available now, including herbs like basil, rosemary and assorted mints. These are herbs you can cook with, eat, or make into a tea. Surprise your macho friends with mint plants and explain it's for their hard drinks (mint chip, mint julep, try mint *lambanog*!). Remind them to water the plant though, and not with *lambanog*. While you're shopping for those plants, why not get a few for your own garden? By next year, you should have enough cuttings to give out to friends. Now that's planning ahead.

* * *

Comments to miguel@pinoykasi.net

McDonald's covered all bases in Balayan

THIS is in response to John Silva's commentary, "Big Mac in Balayan Church." (PDI, 12/12/01)

McDonald's appreciates and supports the efforts of individuals and entities working toward preserving historical sites and the cultural heritage of the country. This is why McDonald's took the necessary steps to ensure the preservation of Balayan's cultural heritage and the historical nature of the Balayan Cathedral.

The McDonald's restaurant in question is approximately 60 meters away from the Balayan Cathedral. The lot being leased by McDonald's is currently used as a parking lot by tricycle and jeepney drivers. It is in front of another fast-food restaurant and across the Immaculate Concepcion College.

The location will not mar any "aesthetic" aspect of the church or the other structures surrounding it. In fact, the architecture of the restaurant was designed to blend with its surroundings to enhance the overall look of the area.

The property is categorized as "commercial" by the Balayan Municipal Assessor's Office. The Sangguniang Bayan declared it as having no legal impediment; thus allowing McDonald's to be issued a locational clearance necessary for construction. A barangay clearance dated Oct. 1, 2001 and a building permit dated Oct. 25, 2001 allowed the contractors to break ground last Oct. 29, 2001.

Every time McDonald's enters a community, the latter benefits through increased employment opportunities as well as economic gains like revenues for the local government and corollary business opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

McDonald's is working with the local parish as well as the municipal government of Balayan to ensure that there is no encroachment on historic grounds.

We would like to listen to the concerns of Silva and invite a representative from the INQUIRER to visit the construction site with us.—**KENNETH S. YANG, executive vice president, Golden Arches Development Corp., 17th Floor, Citibank Centre Bldg., Paseo de Roxas, Makati City**

Xmas crosses out Christ

CHRISTMAS Day, which has been observed every 25th of December since the 4th century A.D., is a Christian feast commemorating the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the Messiah, the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

Since the 1500s, the use of the shortened word X'mas for Christmas became popular in Europe probably because of the Greek word for Christ which is *Xkristos.* X'mas has been used for hundreds of years in religious writing, where the X is understood to represent a Greek *chi*, the first letter of Xι στοζ ("Christ"), or in this use it is parallel to other forms like Xtian ("Christian").

The letter X, aside from its modern-day usage as a mathematical symbol, is a special mark often used to "cross out" something. Thus, substituting the letter X for the word Christ in Christmas, while etymologically innocent of anything, is, to me, tantamount to omitting and/or "crossing out" Christ from the very celebration Christmas is intended for.

It is truly more convenient to use Xmas in writing, but I believe "C'mas" or "Cmas" is more appropriate, respectful and for lack of a better term, ecclesiastically correct.—**ALBERT C. LIM, Unit 64-D Villa Ortigas II, B. Serrano Road, Valencia, Quezon City**

Desierto's accuser has no credibility

ALLOW us to react to the editorial in the Dec. 16 issue of the INQUIRER. We believe that whoever wrote the editorial was grossly misinformed about the complaint of Ernesto Francisco Jr. against Ombudsman Aniano A. Desierto. This letter is intended to correct that awful misimpression and put things in their proper perspective.

Firstly, it is wrong to say that Francisco's story is believable, because it was a "declaration against one's self-interest" and, therefore, an exception to the hearsay rule. At least there was an agreement that the complaint was based on hearsay.

Declaration against interest under Section 38, Rule 130 of the Supreme Court is applicable only if the declarant is dead or unavailable to testify as a witness. The hearsay statement of Francisco purportedly came from Luke Roxas. It can be credible if Roxas is no longer around. But this supposed witness of Francisco is still very much alive and in fact he has denied the story and called Francisco a liar. Francisco was discredited by his own witness. So what credibility are we talking about?

Secondly, the editorial spoke of a video tape he had taken of his supposed conversation with Roxas, as well as some alleged store and hotel receipts he (Francisco) obtained in his meeting with Roxas and freelance mediaman Ding Timbol.

It must be emphasized that in both the tape and receipts, the name of the ombudsman was never mentioned or indicated. Thus, to use them against Desierto would set a bad precedent.

If Francisco's statement would be accepted, all that one has to do is to come out with a spliced tape recording of conversations with a Tom, Dick and Harry, then obtain some receipts, and presto there's a case against an innocent third person who was not involved in or a party to the transactions. This would be a very dangerous thing. It will definitely lead to chaos in our legal and judicial system. It is worse than being in a totalitarian state.

By his own admission, Francisco violated the anti-wiretapping law (RA 4200), which embodies the consistent recognition by all the major departments of government, not the least Congress, of the evil in using as evidence taped matters, as they are highly susceptible to manufacture through widely accessible electronic technology. A fruit of a poisonous tree! It is condemned in any free and independent legal system.

Thirdly, the editorial mentioned a supposedly "puzzling non-action on the so-called Petron scam" by the ombudsman. This is false.

The alleged gift-giving, as being peddled by Francisco, supposedly happened sometime between Aug. 26 and Sept. 10, 1997, or more than four years ago today. He claimed it was made for the purpose of convincing Desierto to sit on the case.

On the contrary, the records in our office show an uninterrupted investigation that was never held in abeyance—from the creation of a panel of ombudsman investigators on May 19, 1997, the approval of the report of the panel by the ombudsman on Aug. 15, 1997, the immediately succeeding conduct on the basis thereof of a preliminary investigation against Bureau of Customs officials (marked by Supreme Court GR No. 133092 that sought to enjoin the preliminary investigation), and eventually the indictment of the customs official responsible for the tax diversion in a resolution dated Feb. 8, 1999. Nothing was held in abeyance!

Even the Supreme Court acknowledged the continuity of the investigation.—**JOSE T. DE JESUS JR., spokesperson, Office of the Ombudsman, Old Nawasa Bldg., 176 Arroceros St., Manila**

Fish prices are too high

IT is ironic that in our country, which is surrounded by water (since it is an archipelago), the price of fish has become prohibitive and beyond the reach of poor Juan de la Cruz. For example, the poor man's fish-*galunggong*, which became a primary campaign issue between then President Ferdinand Marcos and Cory Aquino during the 1986 snap presidential election, now costs P100 a kilo. *Alumahan* and *hasa-hasa* cost more or less the same. *Tilapia* costs P85 a kilo. *Bangus* (the big size) costs P120 a kilo. And here's something for Ripley's: a kilo of the lowly *tuyo* (we call it *hawot* in Mindoro) costs P120.

With these spiraling prices, *paano na si* Juan de la Cruz? Malacañang, the House of Representatives and the Senate should do something about this…fast.—**PAUL R. MORTEL, MBLA Court, Malanday, Marikina City**

A full-blooded Ilocano from Cabugao

WITH REGARD to the Dec. 1 column of retired Justice Isagani A. Cruz, may I state that I am not from Cebu City. Neither is my family.

We are full-blooded Ilocanos living in the third largest town of Ilocos Sur, which will soon be the third city of Ilocos Sur, Cabugao. Yes, we are true Cabugaoeños! It is here in Cabugao that the likes of Joma Sison, Sen. Robert Z. Barbers and the late Commission on Elections Chair Victorino A. Savellano were born.

Perhaps, I was not able to write my address to Justice Cruz when I sent him the letter about Maybelle and Caloy and their daughter, Cara. ("Farewell to Maybelle," PDI, 10/14/01)

Since the letter pad that I used bore the letterhead of Cebu Plaza Hotel, the good justice presumed that we are from Cebu. I was in Cebu City, the first week of September this year.—**RUDY M. SINGSON, 22 Singson St., Barangay Rizal, Cabugao, Ilocos Sur**

Giving credit where it is due

THIS refers to the article "Balangiga heroes send eerie messages" by Rolando O. Borrinaga (PDI, 12/01/01) which said that Capitan Valeriano Abanador was the "overall commander of the successful attack on the American garrison" in the town of Balangiga on Sept. 28, 1901.

In the historical accounts of the war exploits of revolutionary Gen. Vicente Rilles Lukban, the Freedom Fighter reported: "On September 28, 1901 occurred the famous massacre in Balangiga in which the American troops stationed in the town were annihilated almost to a man by the soldiers of General Lukban.…The fearful hand-to-hand struggle in which his trained bolomen engaged the US Army's C.C. 9th Infantry on that fateful day in Balangiga was, according to American chroniclers, 'the bloodiest chapter in the history of the American Army in the Philippines'."

An eyewitness account of that incident gave a picture of horror: "Filipinos wiped out a company of American riflemen with nothing but bolos and raw courage, under the leadership of General Lukban."

While I admire the painstaking research conducted, let us give credit where credit is due. Capitan Valeriano Abanador could not have led the attack on the American Company C, 9th Infantry without the overall command of General Vicente Rilles Lukban, a Bicolano revolutionary hero from Labo, Camarines Norte.—**GODOFREDO O. PETEZA SR., J.P. Rizal St., Daet, 4600 Camarines Norte**

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Educating the youth on options for good governance

YOUR editorials ("New politics" and "Old politics," Dec. 13) lament the loss of innocence of the Sangguniang Kabataan to the old politics of patronage, nepotism and dynastic politics. Envisioned by the law to infuse new, innovative blood into the body politic, the SK, the editorials concluded, became "Dorian Grays, their youth and sunny faces somehow masking the oppressiveness and corruption of our politics."

The editorials added: "Perhaps, this is as good a time as any to rethink public policy toward the youth and how best to initiate them to the body politic." Good point.

It is argued that the launching of the SK 10 years ago did not prepare the youth by providing them with the basic civic knowledge—tools that the SK could have used to make the right choices for innovative political leadership. To be more precise, the SK and our youth today do not have, for instance, a comparative knowledge of the presidential and parliamentary forms of government. If critical and innovative leadership is expected of our youth and the SK, how can they do it when all that they know is the presidential system?

In order to prepare our youth, the SK included, for political leadership, a law should be passed making the study of presidential and parliamentary governments a required subject in senior high school. Our youth can then openly discuss the advantages and disadvantages of both, thus teaching them how to think and make intelligent choices.

But then, will Congress pass such a law when it will question, by comparison, the ways of the old politics?

Today is as good a time as any to rethink public policy and enlighten our youth on the options available for good governance and innovative youth leadership. Will Congress respond?—**FRUCTUOSO SUZARA, executive director, Social Policy Advocacy and Research and Consultants, 15 Charleyville, White Plains, Quezon City**

Personality written in ink

IF we had the expertise, our police investigators handling the Nida Blanca murder case could have applied graphology before the Department of Justice dismissed the extra-judicial confession in his own handwriting of self-confessed killer Philip Medel Jr.

Graphology is the art of inferring someone's character from his handwriting. Handwriting says more about a man than his many chosen words, simply because he cannot hide himself in his handwriting. It's not really a man's hand that is writing, but his brain; it's his personality written in ink. Graphology is uncannily accurate, more useful than psychometric testing.

We really lack scientific knowledge and training, crime laboratory and appropriate technology that can make police investigative work more effective.

I hope President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo included investigative instruments for our police aside from the war armaments for our soldiers when she asked for help from the United States in fighting terrorism.—**RODOLFO MEIM ACEBES, 2118 San Roque 2, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro 5100**

AFP: US military help welcome in fight vs Abu Sayyaf

THE MILITARY spokesperson yesterday said the government should accept offers by the United States or other countries to help fight Muslim guerrillas linked to terrorist suspect Osama bin Laden.

US military men are already in the Philippines in a limited advisory role to help Filipino troops fighting the Abu Sayyaf group, which holds a US couple and a Filipina hostage in Basilan.

Armed Forces spokesperson Brig. Gen. Edilberto Adan suggested that there is room for more direct US involvement.

"This campaign against terrorism is a war without borders. They strike not only Filipinos, they strike at any nationality and we should be openminded if there are nations willing to help to fight against terrorism," he told reporters.

Foreign offers of help should be welcomed "for as long as our sovereignty is respected, according to the established rules."

Officials have said US President George W. Bush offered American combat troops to President Macapagal-Arroyo when she visited Washington last month.

Ms Macapagal aides have said US troops would be welcome to provide training to Filipino forces fighting the Abu Sayyaf, but not to join the actual combat.

Manila and Washington have a 50-year-old mutual defense treaty committing both countries to each other's side in case of an attack.

Adan said the mutual defense pact was "not specific" on whether Filipino and US troops could fight side by side against guerrilla groups such as the Abu Sayyaf.

Both governments say the Abu Sayyaf has several hundred fighters, some with military training in Afghanistan, and that it has ties with Osama bin Laden, the main suspect in the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States.

Several groups of US military advisers have visited Basilan over the past two months. *AFP*

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS

Serge O questions Reyes on $41-M military deals

BY CYNTHIA D. BALANA

THE CONFIRMATION of Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes was delayed by one more day yesterday after Sen. Sergio Osmeña III insisted on seeing copies of contracts entered into by Reyes when he was Armed Forces chief of staff.

Yesterday's deliberations of the Commission on Appointments on Reyes' nomination took nearly six hours.

Osmeña took up most of that time when he grilled Reyes on the purchase by the AFP of four C-130 A and B aircraft from Lockheed Martin and surveillance equipment, all totaling $41 million.

Osmeña said the C-130 contract might have been overpriced, since the AFP was not able to show a comparative study of similar planes being offered for sale by other aircraft manufacturers.

He said Reyes might have violated a law that requires a public bidding and congressional appropriation for such contracts.

Reyes maintained there was no need to undertake a public bidding, pointing to a law that allows direct contracting, especially when there is only a single supplier.

Osmeña said the contract was one-sided and full of loopholes, despite the claim of the Philippine Air Force that the Lockheed package was a big bargain for the government.

According to Reyes, each C-130 A aircraft to be purchased was 10 years old, relatively new as far as aircraft were concerned.

He said the four C-130s had been owned by the British Royal Air Force, which replaced them with a more advanced type of plane, the C-130 J series.

Reyes said the aircraft, which had been used for strategic airlifts, would double as surveillance aircraft to patrol the country's boundaries, as well as its exclusive economic zone.

He pointed out the contract has not been implemented since it is still being reviewed by the National Economic and Development Authority.

"This is not a done deal, your honor," Reyes said, adding the aircraft are still subject to physical inspection and evaluation.

He said the chief of the Philippine Air Force has inspected the aircraft in New Jersey and found them to be in good operating condition.

The aircraft would be flown from the United States to Clark Air Base in Pampanga where Lockheed has offered to put up a $15-million service facility to maintain the aircraft and other types of military planes.

But Osmeña said the government might end up spending too much on maintenance of the aircraft when it could purchase much cheaper planes.

"I have no problem with your good intentions, Secretary Reyes. I just want you to be careful in signing contracts, given your impressive academic credentials," Osmeña told the Cabinet appointee.

"What I'm saying is, you had choices, Mr. Secretary, and we would like to know if your choice was the best," Osmeña added.

Because of Osmeña's intense grilling of Reyes on the Lockheed contract, the CA sub-committee on defense decided to hold an executive session in a bid to arrive at a compromise so the nomination could be submitted to the plenary for voting.

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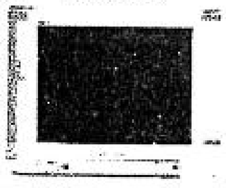

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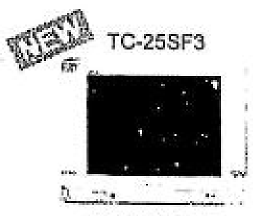

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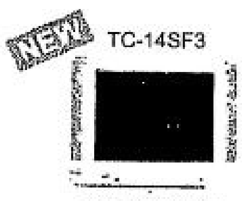

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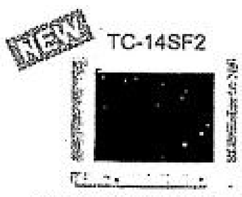

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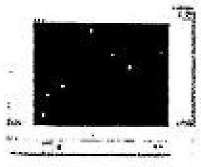

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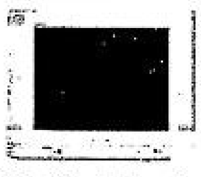

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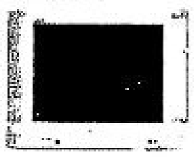

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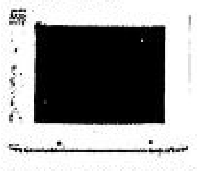

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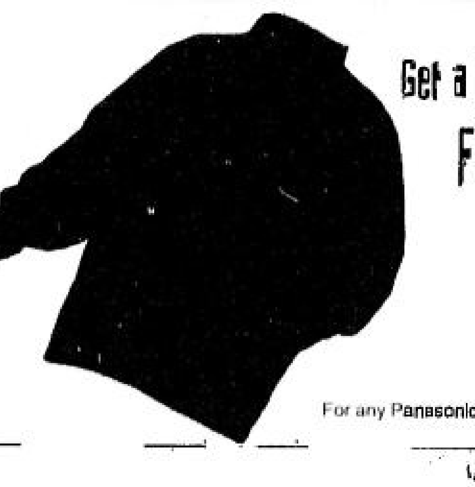

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Rumors about Bin Laden abound

TORA BORA, Afghanistan—US helicopters ran night missions Wednesday through mountain valleys abandoned by al-Qaida forces, while Afghan fighters returned from a sweep of snow-laden cave hideouts bearing more prisoners, documents and rumors about the fugitive terrorist Osama bin Laden.

In Pakistan, at least seven people were killed when dozens of war prisoners from Afghanistan revolted Wednesday when they were being transferred to prison in Peshawar, the largest city in the northeast, said government spokesperson Gen. Rashid Quereshi.

The prisoners seized weapons from their captors and opened fire, then their van overturned, Quereshi said. Three security officers and four prisoners, whom he described only as "foreign fighters," were killed.

A local journalist in Parachinar, near where the incident occurred, said the prisoners were among 250 fleeing al-Qaida members from the Tora Bora area who were arrested Tuesday while trying to cross the border into this semi-autonomous, tribally administered area.

After the firefight, at least 42 prisoners made off in four vans, the journalist said. Tribal security officials and soldiers went after them, catching six. The rest remained at large.

The appointed Afghan leader, Hamid Karzai, said Bin Laden, the al-Qaida leader, and Mohammed Omar, the Islamic cleric who led the brutal five-year Taliban regime, would not be welcome in the new Afghanistan.

"There's no way we can allow them to stay. They've killed our people, they have destroyed our land. We will finish them to the end," Karzai said in Rome after receiving the blessing of the 87-year-old former Afghan King Mohammad Zaher Shah.

Bin Laden's whereabouts remained a mystery.

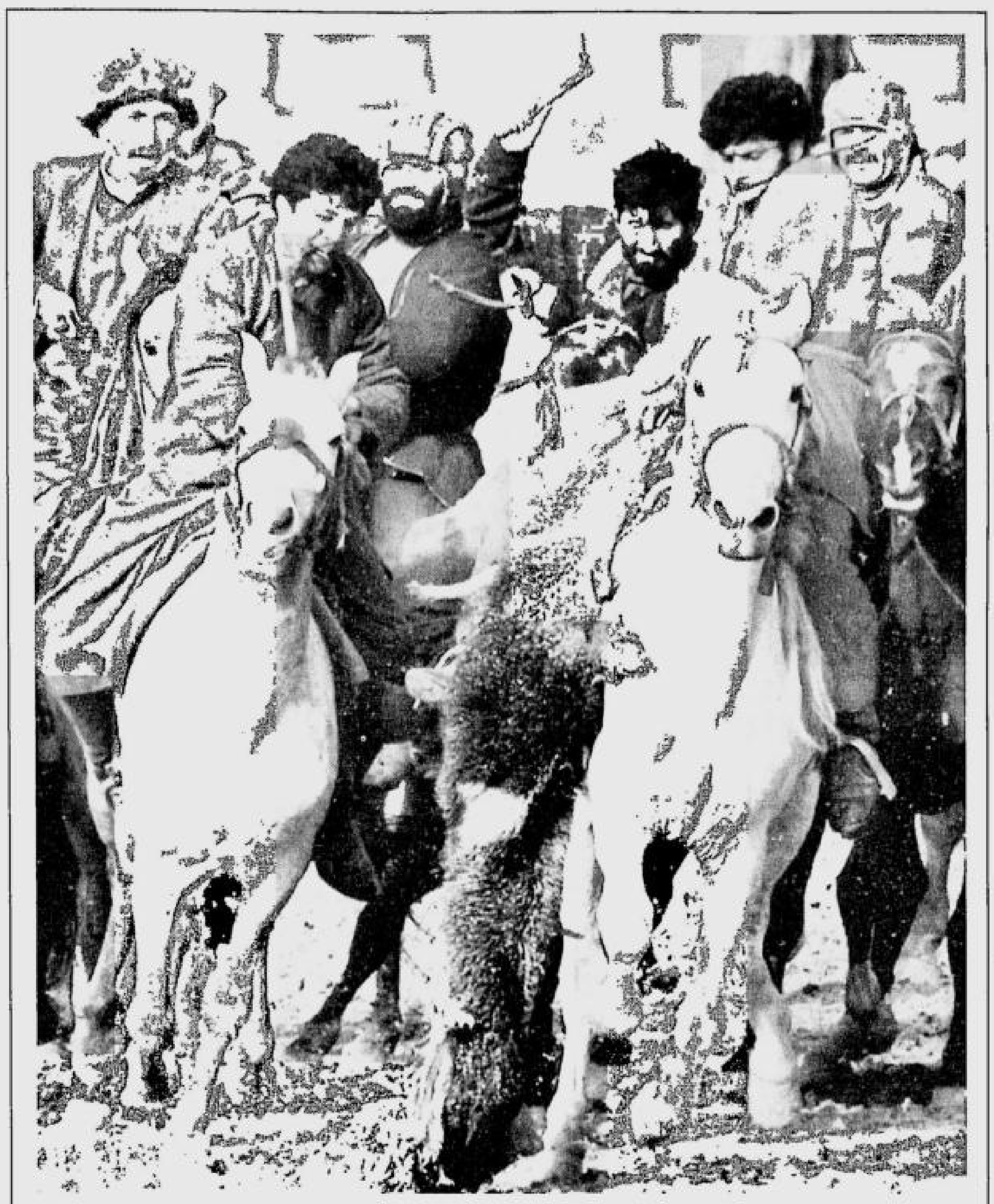
Some captives "are telling us stories about Osama giving a speech 14 days ago and then leaving, but these men are not very credible," Gul said. "I have heard that Osama has shaved his beard and gone to Pakistan, but no one can say for sure."

Hulking black US helicopters took off repeatedly after dark Tuesday and before dawn Wednesday, flying without lights up the valley leading to the warren of caves. The special forces troops assigned to comb the area refused to speak to reporters.

B-52 bombers and EP3 Orion reconnaissance aircraft droned overhead, but no ordnance was dropped.

Afghan fighters returned to their base with piles of maps and Arabic-language documents from caves they searched Tuesday, including a topographical map marking mortar positions and their field of fire, and a training manual to aim tank fire.

Hundreds of al-Qaida members—including some top commanders—were allowed to flee to Pakistan with the connivance of senior Afghan tribal leaders, two eastern alliance officials said. *AP*



HAVING FUN AGAIN AP

Afghan horsemen take part in a traditional game called buzkashi, in which horsemen battle for control of a decapitated goat, in Mazar-i-Sharif on Dec. 18. Thousands jammed the city's hippodrome to watch about 50 riders, many in red-and-black traditional robes, compete furiously at buzkashi. After the fall of the Taliban, Afghans are having fun again.

More troops sent to hunt al-Qaida in Yemen

ADEN, Yemen—Authorities dispatched more troops Wednesday to rugged central Yemen, but no fighting was reported the day after government forces battled armed tribesmen in what appeared the most serious military operation yet in the Arab world to hunt down suspected operatives of Osama bin Laden.

Government security officials said it wasn't clear when the additional troops might participate in a fresh assault on villages in the rugged mountains and hillsides.

Four members of the Abida tribe and eight soldiers were killed in Tuesday's fighting, which began with an assault on the hillside villages with tanks, helicopters and artillery. Twenty-two people, including several soldiers, were injured, according to tribal leaders and sources in the region familiar with the operation.

Five suspected supporters of Bin Laden whom the government was trying to flush out apparently were able to hide or escape the barrage, according to tribal sources and security officials in Marib province, 160 km east of the capital, San'a.

The United States blames Bin Laden's al-Qaida network for the Sept. 11 attacks in the United States and a deadly October 2000 attack on a US destroyer that was refueling in Yemen's port of Aden. American officials have pressured the Yemeni government to crack down on al-Qaida cells in Yemen—and helped train and equip the special forces involved in Tuesday's operation.

The Yemeni security officials said a number of military vehicles and several small homes used by tribesmen in the al-Halsun region of Marib province to fire on the government troops were destroyed Tuesday.

Government forces arrested an undisclosed number of tribesmen suspected of hiding the wanted men, according to an interior ministry statement.

Security also has been tightened in the provinces of Hadramout, Abyan and Lahj, three eastern strongholds of Islamic militants. Bin Laden was born in Saudi Arabia though his father emigrated to the kingdom from Hadramout border region.

The interior ministry statement said special forces were conducting a wide search operation in Marib and adjacent Shabwa provinces. It said only that several people had been killed and injured. *AP*

New Afghan leader gets king's blessings

ROME—Afghanistan's new leader Hamid Karzai bitterly condemned the havoc that the Taliban wreaked on Afghanistan and urged the international community on Wednesday to remain engaged after the war on terrorism ends.

"The international community saw the consequences of neglecting Afghanistan," Karzai told a press conference, a day after meeting with the former Afghan king.

He said he envisioned an international peacekeeping force of about 3,000 to 5,000 troops that would be authorized to use force not only in self defense, but to keep the peace.

"If it takes the use of force to keep the peace, why not?" he said.

He spoke to reporters after getting the blessings of Afghanistan's former king and before he was set to take office on Saturday as the head of an interim government that will rule Afghanistan following the ouster of the Taliban.

On Wednesday, the second day of his visit to Rome, Karzai met with the US ambassador to Italy and was scheduled to hold talks with the Italian foreign minister, Renato Ruggiero.

US Ambassador Mel Sembler "was interested in hearing from Karzai on the situation" in Afghanistan, said embassy spokesperson Ian Kelly. "We had no particular message to deliver."

Karzai paid his respects to Mohammad Zaher Shah at the exiled monarch's Roman villa on Tuesday evening and said there that his top priorities in office would be to "fight terrorism to the end" and revive Afghanistan's war-wrecked economy.

As if to underscore the importance of the moment, Zaher Shah stepped outside the heavily guarded home to make a rare appearance before media. Zaher Shah said he had given Karzai advice on "a lot of things" on how to lead the country, but didn't elaborate.

"He has been giving me advice for many years," said Karzai, a distant relative of the king's and also Pashtun, Afghanistan's dominant ethnic group. "The moment I sat with him, he wished me very well and said he was very glad that I have taken this charge." *AP*

Palestinian Authority arrests 15 members of security forces

JERUSALEM—Fifteen members of the Palestinian security forces have been arrested as part of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's enforcement of a truce with Israel, the Palestinian Authority announced Wednesday.

It marked the first time in nearly 16 months of Israeli-Palestinian fighting that Arafat ordered Palestinian policemen taken into custody on suspicion they participated in attacks on Israelis.

Israel's armed forces chief, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, said Tuesday that of 242 people killed on the Israeli side since September 2000, at least 80 were killed by members of the Palestinian security forces.

As part of the crackdown, Palestinian police also closed six offices of the Islamic militant group Hamas in the Gaza Strip late Tuesday. The offices were centers for youth, political and social activities. Hamas has carried out dozens of attacks, including suicide bombings, in Israel in recent years.

A Palestinian security chief in Gaza, Mohammed Dahlan, said the Palestinian Authority would not tolerate independent action by the militants. "We will arrest anyone who violates Authority decisions," he said.

The arrests followed a weekend speech by Arafat in which he called for an end to attacks against Israel, including suicide bomb attacks, referring to them as "terrorist activity" for the first time.

However, Israel has been skeptical, saying Arafat was not making enough of an effort. Last week, Israel's Cabinet cut ties with Arafat and declared him "irrelevant" to its fight against terror attacks. *AP*

INDIAN activists burn an effigy of Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf during a demonstration in New Delhi. The activists accused Pakistan of engineering Thursday's attack on the Indian Parliament building, which killed 14 people, including the five assailants. REUTERS

New Delhi discusses war after terror attack

NEW DELHI—India's prime minister said on Wednesday that the government was discussing war, as well as diplomacy, in response to last week's suicide attack on Parliament that it blames on Pakistan-based militants.

"The question is not whether there should be a war or not," Atal Bihari Vajpayee told Parliament. "The question to be debated is in what circumstances there could be a war."

Vajpayee said the Pakistani government knew there were forces within Pakistan that were taking part in terrorism. He repeated India's demand that it put them out of business.

"We are trying to address this diplomatically, but other options are also open, too," Vajpayee said during the second day of debate over the Dec. 13 assault on the legislative compound that left 13 people, including the attackers, dead.

India says all five attackers were Pakistanis and that the neighboring country's intelligence service sponsored the attack. Pakistan has denied the charge.

The armies of both nuclear-armed nations' armies are reported to be on alert.

The Indian Army said it engaged in heavy firing on Pakistani border outposts and bunkers Wednesday and both sides were exchanging gunfire on the Jammu-Kashmir frontier. An Indian Army spokesperson said soldiers had fired across the border on Tuesday night to retaliate against Pakistani firing, which was allegedly aimed at covering for Islamic militant infiltrators.

Pakistan says it supports the cause of the militants—to separate Kashmir from India—but denies it gives them material aid. Border firing is common, with each side accusing the other of starting it.

In answer to the US government's call for India and Pakistan to exercise restraint as Washington seeks their help in the global war on terrorism, Vajpayee said, "We have reached the pinnacle of restraint."

When US President George W. Bush telephoned to express condolences after the Parliament attack, Vajpayee said, "I told him that the terrorists were linked to Pakistan, were under the control of Pakistan and working at the behest of Pakistan."

"India has a legitimate right to self-defense," but any action it takes should not add to the complications in the region, White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer said on Tuesday.

The attack on India's parliament "is not a reason for India or Pakistan to take action against each other," Fleischer said. "This is a time for India and Pakistan to take action against the terrorists." *AP*

Argentine tensions spill over into looting

BUENOS AIRES—Police fired tear gas and rubber bullets to quell a looting rampage near the capital by about 2,000 people who pried open metal gates to shops and carted away everything from food to clothing and shoes early Wednesday as social tensions spilled over from an economic crisis.

The latest unrest came after a weekend of scattered supermarket looting in some of Argentina's hardest-hit cities that followed a partial freeze on banking and other government restrictions.

Hundreds of people, some shouting angrily against the austerity government of President Fernando De la Rua, gathered in a rundown shopping district late Tuesday in San Miguel, on the northwestern fringes of greater Buenos Aires.

Demonstrators lit trash fires in the streets and looted small shops of everything from food and soft drinks to clothing and shoes. Television broadcast scenes of fires lit by protesters who twisted open metal shop gates and shattered plate glass windows.

Middle-age women with shopping bags also took part, picking up goods scattered on the streets.

"We don't have any money, we are hungry and we have to eat!" one unidentified woman in the growing crowd shouted.

Police using tear gas and rubber bullets clashed with the crowd, which later was estimated to have swelled to 2,000 people.

Police said five officers were injured, but they had no reports on any injuries among the crowd, which eventually dispersed.

A police official, Juan Alberto Saiz, told the newspaper La Nacion that some 2,000 people had taken part in the disturbance and that some 40 shops were looted but that damage was being assessed on Wednesday.

The area where the looting occurred is located along a broad avenue in an area where unemployment has soared well above the nationwide average. *AP*

Maluku violence leaves 10 dead

JAKARTA—Unidentified gunmen on a speedboat opened fire on a ferry carrying Christians in Indonesia's eastern Maluku islands Wednesday, killing 10 people, witnesses and medical officials said.

The victims were fish and vegetable traders traveling to an early morning market in Ambon, the provincial capital. The gunmen were traveling from a Muslim area of town and were armed with automatic weapons, witnesses said.

Last week, seven Christians were killed in an explosion on a boat in the same waters.

The latest bloodshed comes after a six-month period of relative calm in the archipelagic province, 2,600 km east of Jakarta. *AP*

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10:00 am to 4:00 pm
New Divisoria
11:00 am to 5:00 pm
Tutuban
12:00 nn to 6:00 pm
Divisoria Center
DECEMBER 24
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
ADB
Head Office
Pasay-Libertad
DECEMBER 29
8:00 am to 2:00 pm
San Nicolas
8:30 am to 2:30 pm
Gen. Luna-Paco
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
20th Avenue-P. Tuazon
A. Lacson
Anonas
Aurora Blvd.
EDSA-Shaw
Farmers Plaza
Pasig-Mabini
Pateros
Pureza
UST-España
10:00 am to 4:00 pm
Tutuban Centermall 2
11:00 am to 5:00 pm
Tutuban
DECEMBER 30
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Q. C. Rotonda Center
DECEMBER 31
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Alabang
Divisoria Center
Folgueras
Head Office
Ireneville-Sucat
Kabihasnan
10:00 am to 4:00 pm
Tondo

LUZON
DECEMBER 22
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Agoo, La Union
Aparri
Baguio-Bonifacio
Baguio-Cariño
Baguio-Magsaysay
Baguio-Naguilian
Baguio-Session
Bangued, Abra
Batac, Ilocos Norte
Bulan
Cabanatuan-Paco Roman
Calamba Real
Calapan
Candon
Cauayan
Daraga, Albay
Gumaca
Ilagan
La Trinidad, Benguet
La Union
La Union-ML Quezon
Laoag
Laoag-Gen. Segundo Ave.
Legazpi-Mabini
Lucena-Quezon
Masbate
Naga
Occidental Mindoro
Santiago
Santiago-City Road
Siniloan
Solano
Sorsogon
Tabaco, Albay
Tuguegarao
Vigan
DECEMBER 29
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Agoo, La Union
Alaminos, Pangasinan
Apalit
Aparri
Baguio-Bonifacio
Baguio-Cariño
Baguio-Magsaysay
Baguio-Naguilian
Baguio-Session
Balanga, Bataan
Baliuag
Baliuag-Trinidad Highway
Bangued, Abra
Batac, Ilocos Norte
Cabanatuan
Cabanatuan Maharlika-North
Calapan
Candon
Carmen, Rosales, Pangasinan
Cauayan
Daet
Dagupan-Perez
Daraga, Albay
Dinalupihan, Bataan
Guagua
Gumaca
Hagonoy, Bulacan
Iba, Zambales
Ilagan
Iriga, Camarines Sur
La Trinidad, Benguet
La Union
La Union-ML Quezon
Laoag
Laoag-Gen. Segundo Ave.
Legazpi, Albay
Los Baños
Lucena
Muñoz, Nueva Ecija
Naga-Peñafrancia
Occidental Mindoro
Olongapo
Palawan
San Fernando, Pampanga
San Fernando-B. Mendoza
San Fernando-Dolores
San Fernando-Sindalan
San Jose, Nueva Ecija
San Miguel, Bulacan
San Pablo-Colago
Santiago
Santiago-City Road
Solano
Sorsogon
Subic Bay
Subic-Baraca
Tabaco
Tuguegarao
Urdaneta, Pangasinan
Vigan
DECEMBER 30
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Apalit
Calamba-Crossing
San Pablo-Maharlika Highway
Sta. Maria-Poblacion Market
DECEMBER 31
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Apalit
Balanga, Bataan
Balayan-Batangas
Baliuag
Baliuag-Trinidad Highway
Batangas
Bauan-Batangas
Dagupan
Dagupan-Fernandez
Dinalupihan, Bataan
Esteban Mayo-Lipa
Guagua
Hagonoy, Bulacan
Iba, Zambales
Kumintang Ilaya-Batangas
Lemery-Batangas
Lipa
Lipa-Ayala
Nasugbu, Batangas
Olongapo
Rosario-Batangas
San Carlos, Pangasinan
San Fernando, Pampanga
San Fernando-B. Mendoza
San Fernando-Dolores
San Fernando-Sindalan
San Miguel, Bulacan
Subic Bay
Subic-Baraca
Tanauan
9:00 am to 4:00 pm
San Pablo
Sta. Cruz, Laguna

VISAYAS
DECEMBER 22
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Antique
DECEMBER 24
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Cebu-Taboan
DECEMBER 29
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Bacolod-Araneta
Bacolod-Capitol
Bacolod-Gonzaga
Bacolod-Libertad
Baybay
Maasin
Silay, Neg. Occidental
DECEMBER 31
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Bacolod-6th Street
Bacolod-Gatuslao
Cebu-Carbon
Cebu-Downtown Center
Cebu-Taboan
Roxas
Roxas-Burgos
San Carlos

MINDANAO
DECEMBER 22
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
General Santos-Pioneer
General Santos-Santiago
DECEMBER 23
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Zamboanga
DECEMBER 24
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Pagadian
DECEMBER 29
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Cotabato-Rufino Alonzo
Marbel
Midsayap
DECEMBER 30
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Zamboanga
Zamboanga-Brillantes
Zamboanga-Galleria
Zamboanga-Veterans
DECEMBER 31
8:30 am to 2:30 pm
Davao-Agdao
Davao-Bajada
Davao-Bankerohan
Davao-Buhangin
Davao Center
Davao-Ecoland
Davao-Matina
Davao-Monteverdie
Davao-Panabo
Davao-Rizal
Davao-San Pedro
Davao-Sta. Ana
Digos
Tagum
Toril
DECEMBER 31
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Basilan
Butuan
Cagayan de Oro-Cogon
Cagayan de Oro-Divisoria Park
Cagayan de Oro-Lapasan
Cagayan de Oro-Velez
Dipolog
Ozamis
Ozamis-Burgos
Pagadian
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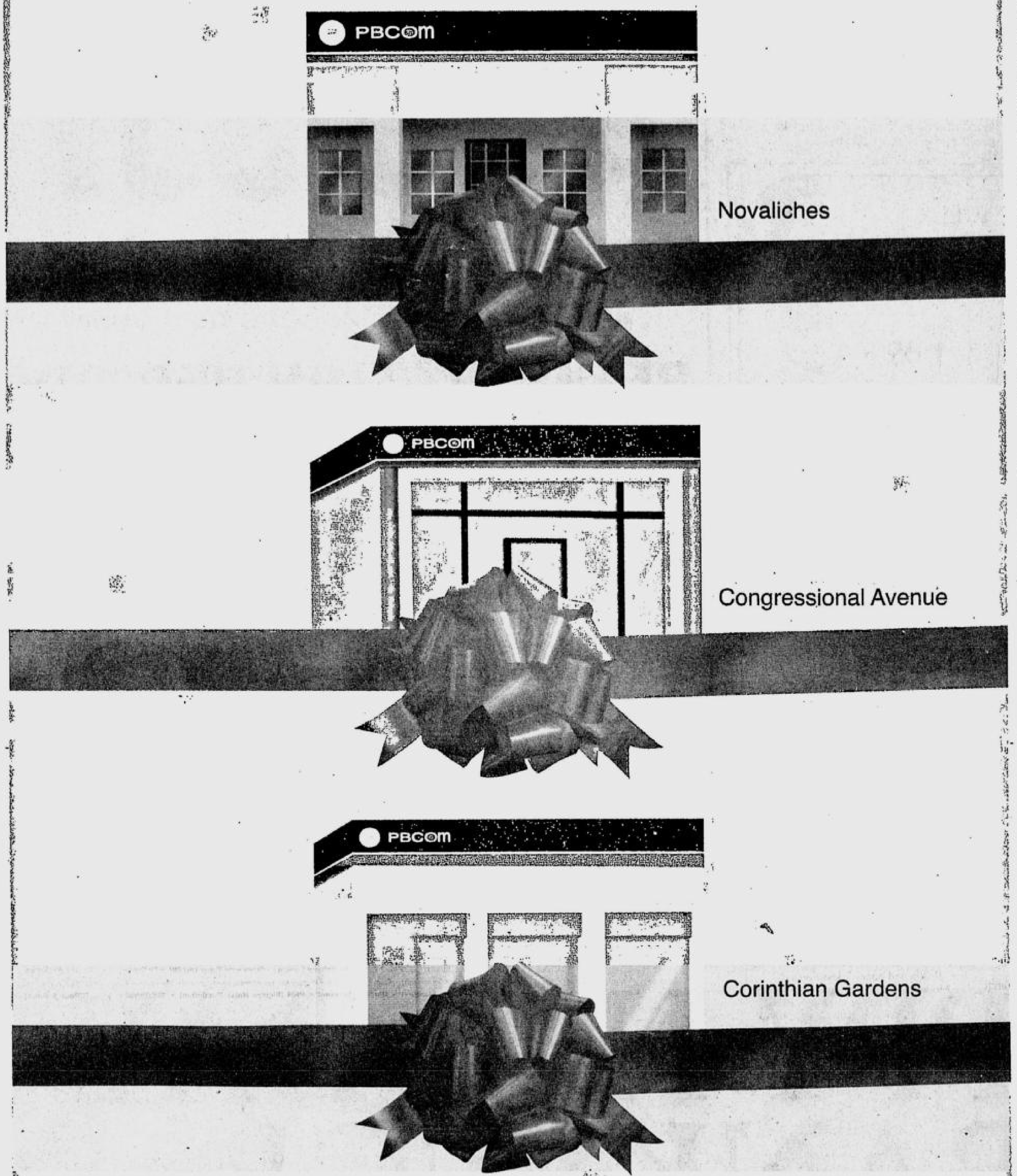

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Haiti coup plotters hunted

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—Police searched for coup conspirators Tuesday as some opposition leaders claimed that what President Jean-Bertrand Aristide called a failed coup was really staged as a pretext to crush dissent.

The attack touched off widespread protests and violence by Aristide supporters, who blamed the opposition.

"The so-called coup d'etat was a masquerade," opposition leader Evans Paul said. The former Port-au-Prince mayor's party headquarters were destroyed Monday—for the third time in 10 years—by Aristide supporters seeking revenge after armed men stormed the National Palace before dawn.

Aristide was not at the palace early Monday morning, when authorities say 33 heavily armed men shot and killed two police officers and took over one wing of the building for seven hours before they fled. Fleeing attackers were shot by two passers-by. *AP*

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, December 20, 2001
3rd Week of Advent

1st Reading: **Is 7:10-14**
Gospel: **Lk 1:26-38**

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth. He was sent to a young virgin who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the family of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

The angel came to her and said, "Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with you." Mary was troubled at these words, wondering what this greeting could mean.

But the angel said, "Do not fear, Mary, for God has looked kindly on you. You shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call him Jesus. He will be great and shall rightly be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the kingdom of David, his ancestor; he will rule over the people of Jacob forever and his reign shall have no end."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be if I am a virgin?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the holy child to be born shall be called Son of God. Even your relative Elizabeth is expecting a son in her old age, although she was unable to have a child, and she is now in her sixth month. With God nothing is impossible."

Then Mary said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me as you have said." And the angel left her.

Commentary

This text of the Gospel has been an inspiration to poets, painters and sculptors. To all kind of artists. Theologians have likewise written a number of books on the incarnation and the Virgin Mary. Yet, none of them perhaps have been at par with these artists who opened their hearts to capture the profound meaning and the amazing beauty of a young woman from Galilee who welcomed God's visit in the austerity of her heart. Her consent opened the portals of hope to all humanity. Now is the chance to be overwhelmed by the simplicity and the grandeur of that scene. This is Christmas, and a good one at that!

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

CRIMINAL LAW (DECEIT, SWINDLING00—*Estafa*—Both elements of the crime of *estafa* were established in these cases, namely, (a) accused-appellant defrauded complainant by abuse of confidence or by means of deceit and (b) complainant suffered damage or prejudice capable of pecuniary estimation as a result. Complainants parted with their money upon the prodding and enticement of accused-appellant on the false pretence that she had the capacity to deploy them for employment abroad. In the end, complainants were neither able to leave for work overseas nor did they get their money back, thus causing them damage and prejudice. The issues that misappropriation on the part of accused-appellant of the money paid by complainants and their demand for the same were not sufficiently established are immaterial and irrelevant, conversion and demand not being elements of *estafa* under Art. 315 (2) (a) of the Revised Penal Code. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Mendoza, Second Division, People v. Gonzales-Flores, G.R. Nos. 138535-38, April 19, 2001]

DIGEST BY R.B. VERA

for Trixie
JOY
PEACE
for Lola
for Mommy
for Kuya
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for Tita Tess
for Ate
for LoLo
for Tito Boy
Greetings
for Daddy
Season's Greetings

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TEARS at first sight of Santa Claus from Finland, this boy was one of the assembly of youngsters at the World Trade Center in Pasay where Santa distributed gifts.

ERIK ARAZAS

Mall mean to little Santa

BELLINGHAM, Washington—A 6-year-old boy who dresses up like Santa Claus and doles out presents has been told by a local mall to take his holiday cheer somewhere else.

"I was cuter than their Santa," Joel Demmon declared Monday.

The first grader has been donning a red suit and flowing white beard for two years and giving away presents at malls and stores, said his mother, Tracey Demmon.

Joel gets the toys from dollar stores and fast-food restaurants.

The boy cried after an employee of Bellis Fair in north Bellingham ordered him out on Friday, saying he was competing with the mall's own Santa and creating liability issues by giving out toys, his mother said.

But Bellis Fair spokesperson Mary Vermillion said the would-be St. Nick got the boot "in fairness to everybody who wants access to the mall, so we avoid any unfortunate situations." Vermillion said it had nothing to do with a fear of competition.

Joel has continued his gift-giving elsewhere in Bellingham, a town of about 60,000 located about 145 kilometers north of Seattle. *AP*

Little Jeremaia . . .

(From page A1)

and said she needed a liver transplant abroad to save her life.

The girl's mother, Jesselou Matubis, needed three weeks to prepare for the trip to the States. She understood that there was no guarantee her daughter would receive the needed liver transplant once she got to the Minnesota.

Jesselou applied for Jeremaia's visa, wrote letters to airlines in the two countries for donations of plane tickets, sought financial assistance from the World Children's Transplant Fund and helped her family raise funds for miscellaneous expenses.

The Matubis family, including Jesselou's parents, Jess and Lulu, did media interviews in the Philippines to raise awareness of the family's situation. They also granted interviews in the United States to reach Filipino communities in Chicago and California.

"Even though we live in this crazy world, there are still good people out there," Jesselou said.

Jesselou and Jeremaia flew to Rochester on March 15, 2000, along with Jeremaia's doctor from the Philippines and one of Jesselou's sisters, who has the same blood type as Jeremaia.

In the States, Jeremaia's appearance startled people.

"It would have just ripped you to pieces" to see Jeremaia, said Meladee Hughes, president of Bridges Across the Atlantic.

She said the baby "looked like a mummy."

Despite the odds, Hughes said she knew the Matubis family wouldn't give up on Jeremaia.

"Something told me we were going to have a miracle," she said.

Two weeks after the family arrived in Rochester, a liver became available for Jeremaia. Mayo doctors performed a six-hour transplant surgery.

Jeremaia stayed in the hospital from March 15 to April 17 and then spent a year at Ronald McDonald House in Rochester.

The toddler encountered some setbacks during her recovery, including pneumonia, tonsillitis, inactive hepatitis and three episodes of minor organ rejection.

But all seems to be going well now.

Except for routine checkups, Jeremaia hasn't returned to the hospital since May this year. The number of medications the little girl must take daily has been reduced from 16 to seven.

Her anti-rejection drugs caused extreme hair growth on the Jeremaia's body. Her thick, black hair was so noticeable some people jokingly told Jesselou that her daughter looked like Elvis because she had sideburns.

Jesselou said she never took offense at those comments because hair growth was a sign of her daughter's improving health.

"I would rather have her hairy and plump than have her all skin and bones," Jesselou said.

Mother and daughter now live in a house in Rochester along with Jesselou's two older sisters who attend college and help care for Jeremaia.

"It was a big decision for my family and my sisters to leave their personal lives and careers to help me out here," Jesselou said.

At her mother's urging, Jesselou has decided to become a nurse. She enrolled this fall at Rochester Community and Technical College. She said she hopes to someday work for Mayo Clinic.

Meanwhile, her family in the Philippines now tries to help other babies like Jeremaia.

Jess and Lulu Matubis started a foundation—the Biliary Atresia Babies Information, Education and Support—for families with children suffering from the disease. *AP*

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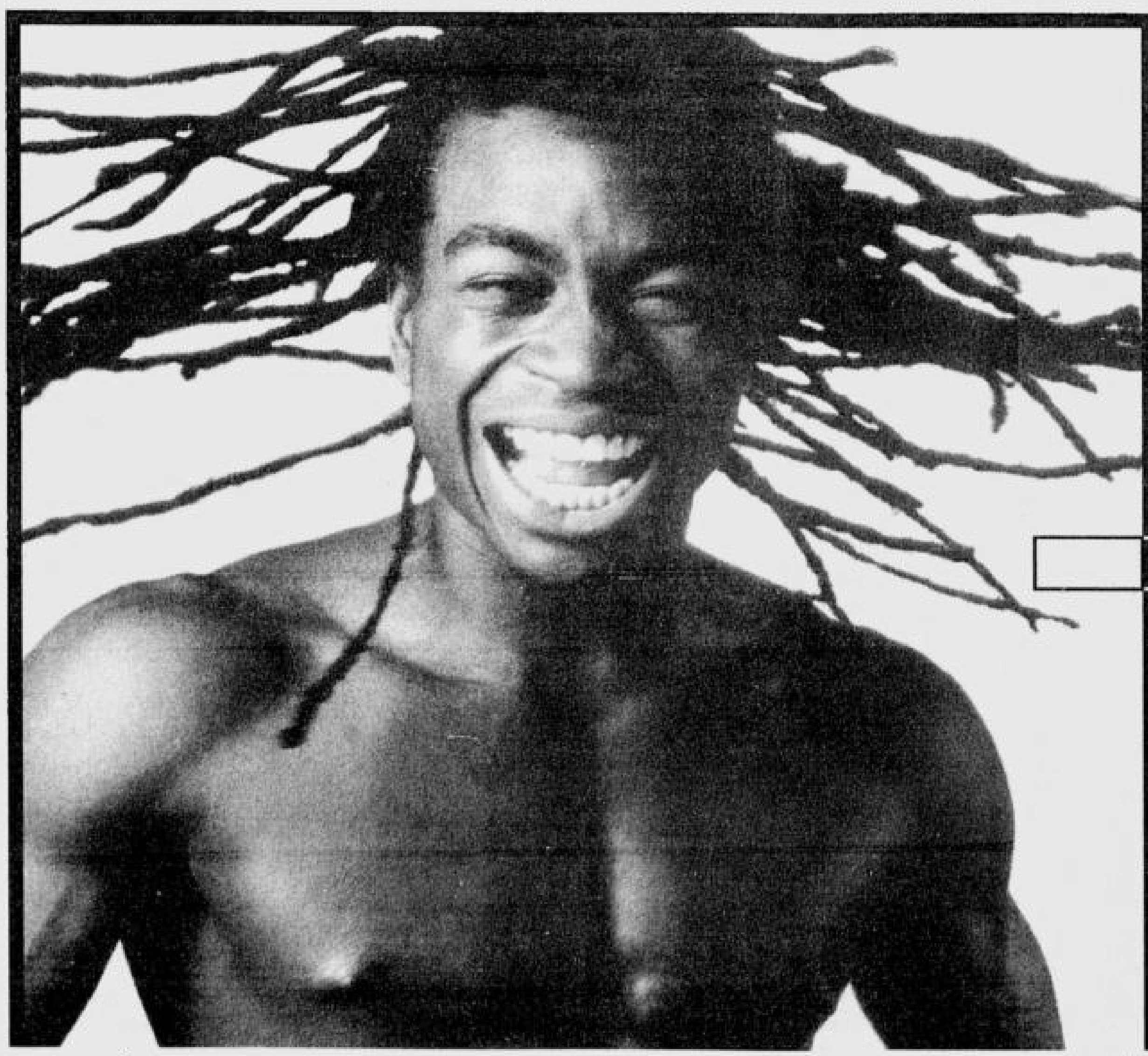

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Poverty driving women to Cafgu

MATI, Davao Oriental—Economic hardship has forced some women here to join the Citizens' Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu).

The women, with ages ranging from 18 to 45, said the P1,860 monthly allowance they receive for being "part-time government soldiers" is already a big help in feeding their families.

And like their counterparts, which in most cases could be their husbands or brothers, they also join in actual anti-insurgency operations.

Of course, we are sent to war because we are Cafgu members. We go along with our husbands and children. It's really difficult but it's where our income comes from)," Janet Abadinas, a 45-year-old militiawoman, said in Cebuano.

Abadinas said her husband and her two other male children are also Cafgu members based in Barangay Mahayag in Banaybanay town.

Maj. Alexis Gopico, commander of the Army's 8th Special Forces Battalion said he still does not know how many women Cafgus there are in the provinces.

But based on Abadinas's claim, at least 10 other women have joined the militia in her village alone.

She said because of the worsening economic crisis, other women are also prepared to become Cafgu members themselves.

"(Because) there's no other job to take nowadays unless you are willing to go into the flesh trade," Abadinas said in the vernacular.

During the accounting of personnel at the headquarters of the Army's 8th Special Forces Battalion here, the INQUIRER saw at least five other women Cafgu members sporting the trademark Garand and M14 rifles.

Maj. Alexis Gopico, commander of the 8th Special Forces Battalion, said like their male counterparts, women Cafgu members are also subjected to the mandatory and rigid three months military training.

"But personally, I don't like to deploy them in gun battles because they have different resistance power than their male counterparts," Maj. Gopico said.

Some males in the militia also appear to harbor biases against the women.

A militiaman who asked not to be named, said if more women are to be allowed, they should only be confined to the detachments "and do the cooking for us."

Another male Cafgu member was wondering how the women would relieve themselves in the middle of an intense firefight.

"They would have to take off their pants before the very eyes of their male comrades, which is really very difficult especially if they are at their monthly period of menstruation," he said.

However, Abadinas just laughed off the biases.

"We are far better than our male counterparts. I myself have felled many enemies of the state," she said.

Gopico said although he has his own reservations about women joining the militia, the military would continue to accept women applicants.

"Anybody can join the Cafgu whether you are old or young or members of the so-called third sex. The age requirement is 18 years old above, so even if you are in your 60s as long as you are mentally and physically fit, a natural-born Filipino citizen, has no criminal records and whose loyalty to the republic is unquestionable, you can qualify to be in the Cafgu," he said. ***Ferdinand O. Zuasola, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern and Central Visayas and Northeastern Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers particularly over the Eastern sections.

SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Hi 31° Lo 22°
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Hi 24° Lo 14°
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 19°
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Hi 32° Lo 20°
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Hi 31° Lo 22°
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Hi 29° Lo 18°
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Hi 28° Lo 24°
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 20°
Bacolod	Partly Cloudy	Hi 31° Lo 24°
Roxas	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 25°
Cebu	Cloudy with Rains	Hi 30° Lo 23°
Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains	Hi 33° Lo 24°
Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy	Hi 32° Lo 23°
Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy	Hi 33° Lo 24°
Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy	Hi 32° Lo 24°
Davao	Partly Cloudy	Hi 32° Lo 24°

Compiled by: Ray Leyesa, PDI Research/12/20/01

ROUNDUP

New priest of Marawi

OZAMIZ CITY—Pope John Paul II has appointed Fr. Edwin de la Peña to the Prelature of Marawi City, according to Bishop Jesus Dosado of the Archdiocese of Ozamiz. Bishop Dosado said on Sunday that De la Peña would take his vow before Msgr. Antonio Franco, the Papal Nuncio, on Dec. 27 here. De la Peña, currently the apostolic administrator of the prelature of Marawi, has been active in the Muslim-Christian dialogue ministry in Lanao del Sur. ***Ryan D. Rosauro, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

Barangay exec killed

DAVAO CITY—A barangay official of Kiblawan, Davao del Sur, was killed while eight others were wounded after they were ambushed by still unidentified armed men on Monday. Senior Supt. Guillermo Lara, Davao del Sur police director, identified the fatality as Alfredo Canacan. The other victims were identified as husband and wife Sergio and Virgie Hinay, Vicente Hinay, Elen Cose, Emely Onggaco and alyas Inday Mescalam; Inday Pendatun and Inday Malila, all of Kimlawis. Lara said Canacan was riding in a government owned dump truck and was accompanying some youth for the Sangguniang Kabataan voters' registration when the suspects attacked. ***Dennis Jay Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

Father, son nabbed

DAVAO CITY—A father and son were arrested, along with another companion, after they robbed a bus in Matti, Digós City. Police identified the suspects as Fidel Jagonos, 43, his son Darrel, 16, and Joel Torres, residents of Rizal, Bansalan, Davao del Sur. Reports said that on Saturday evening, the suspects boarded a Weena bus in Bansalan, Davao del Sur. Fidel, who was armed with a .38 cal. revolver, pointed his gun at the bus driver and declared a holdup as it was cruising Barangay Matti, some 10 kilometers from Digos. The suspects fled but police later arrested the young Jagonos who gave information on the hideaway of his father and Torres.
Anthony S. Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Co-op execs face raps

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya—The provincial prosecutor's office here endorsed the filing of criminal charges against six officials and personnel of a cooperative for the alleged smuggling of about P1.2 million worth of narra lumber from Cagayan. Prosecutor Edilberto Calip said there was probable cause to hold officials and personnel of the Bolos Point Multipurpose Cooperative Inc. (BPMPCI) liable for the illegal transport of 6,085 board feet of narra in September. Charges of illegal logging were recommended against BPMPCI chair Marcos Echanique, supposed shipper Mariano Taguinod, truck driver Rogelio Bartolome and helpers Billy Bartolome, Eduardo Lucas and Jerome de la Torre.
Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Arzadon, 58

BAGUIO CITY—Eduardo Arzadon, father of INQUIRER correspondent in Ilocos Norte Cristina Arzadon, died Wednesday at the Philippine Heart Center in Quezon City. He was 58. Arzadon, manager of the member services department of the Ilocos Norte Electric Cooperative, is survived by his wife Evelyn and children Warren, Maria Tereza, Cristina and Edward Jason. His body will lie at the family residence in Barangay 9 San Pedro in Paoay, Ilocos Norte. Interment will be announced later.
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

No long break for GenSan workers

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Unlike their counterparts in other areas of the country, workers of the city government would not have a long vacation.

Mayor Pedro Acharon Jr. said he would ask local government employees to report for work on Dec. 26-28 to ensure that the delivery of services is not paralyzed.

Acharon said that Presidential Proclamation 129 issued by President Macapagal-Arroyo declared the day after Christmas and Innocent's Day as special working holidays.

Acharon said local executives were given an option whether or not to require their workers to render services during the said days.

"I hope nobody will oppose. I already ordered the release of the employees' additional P5,000 Christmas bonus. I hope they work in exchange for it," the mayor said.

Acharon said that he already asked the officers of the General Santos City Government Employees Association to support his move "in the interest of public service."

Union president Restituto Facurib Jr. told reporters that they are supportive of the mayor's move.

However, he said that employees who would work on the said dates should be given overtime pay.

Acharon said he would issue a memorandum anytime from today, so everybody would be aware of the need to report on Dec. 26 and Dec. 28. ***Aquiles Z. Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

Group to raise funds for rice terraces

BY VINCENT CABREZA
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—Ifugao Gov. Teodoro Baguilat's "old school network" of Manila-based conservationists is pooling its resources to solicit a P2-million start-up fund for a long-term private sector-led crusade aimed at rescuing the Ifugao rice terraces.

The centuries-old terraces were included in the "endangered list" of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) during its annual summit in Helsinki, Finland. The inclusion came only six years after the terraces' inscription as a World Heritage Site.

"This is an embarrassment for the government, but it comes at such a bad time. The government deficit ensures that (Malacañang) would not be able to provide funds for the terraces even if they needed to. All the heritage commissions (the Philippine counterpart agencies supervising the maintenance or rehabilitation of heritage sites) are being reviewed for termination because of a need to cut government spending," Baguilat told the INQUIRER by telephone on Saturday.

The rice terraces, the Spanish colonial buildings of Vigan City in Ilocos Sur, Palawan's St. Paul subterranean park and the Tubbataha Reef, and the Baroque churches of the Philippines are among the heritage sites protected by the Philippine government.

THE are in the Unesco Heritage List but not in the list of government priorities for funding.
FILE

Batanes next

The country is awaiting a Unesco announcement from Finland that declares the inscription of the island-province of Batanes in the World Heritage List.

Baguilat had just organized a support group of friends and professionals whose "voluntary expertise" could help ignite "the national consciousness" about saving the terraces.

"I realized that this was no longer a parochial concern of the Ifugaos, but of the whole nation. These are friends volunteering their skills to mount a campaign for the rice terraces," he said.

The support team plans to target foreign donors by 2003, in a "marketing calendar" to promote the terraces.

On Dec. 26, Discovery Channel will also debut a documentary on Ifugao, filmed by Kidlat de Guia, son of filmmaker Kidlat Tahimik.

Baguilat said the province was already prepared for the Helsinki report because of a November fact-finding mission conducted by Unesco experts.

Alarmed

The experts were alarmed when they discovered that government investments in the terraces' upkeep had been "meager" under three administrations.

A three-year development master plan for restoring the terraces requires a P1.3-billion outlay. But former Presidents Fidel Ramos and Joseph Estrada, and President Macapagal-Arroyo had so far given only P224 million or 16 percent of the project's requirements, said Lauris Anudon, planning director of the Banaue Rice Terraces Task Force.

Anudon said the mission's findings stopped short of accusing Malacañang of reneging on its commitment to Unesco, when the terraces were inscribed in the World Heritage List in 1995.

The Philippine commitments are incorporated in the World Heritage Conventions of 1985, which Malacañang had ratified.

The Unesco experts said the Philippine government only has 10 years to restore the terraces and reverse the deterioration of these engineering wonders of the ancient world, Baguilat said.

"Beyond that, *wala na* (There's nothing). We lose the terraces. Their deterioration was pegged between 20 and 30 percent, and this is a substantial deterioration. But Ifugao residents have not reacted yet because the deterioration is not immediate. It was not tangible enough except to a trained eye," he said.

"I have been asking government to instead allow the Ifugao provincial government to directly address the problem, if it cannot support a national agency. But so far, I have not received any response."

Not seen

Few government officials have even stepped foot on the terraces, much less seen these, Baguilat said.

The most recent Cabinet official to see the terraces was Sen. Edgardo Angara, during his stint as agriculture secretary in 2000.

Under the Macapagal administration, only Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon had so far committed to visit Ifugao.

"He actually acknowledged that he had great plans and visions for the terraces, but he had yet to see the terraces. So I invited him on Jan. 11 next year to be able to show exactly how people in Ifugao lived," Baguilat said.

He said Gordon's key program was to reinstate a controversial government plan to restore indigenous Ifugao huts located around the terraces.

"Gordon told me that a German tourist had once complained about the (aluminum) roofing of contemporary Ifugao houses. He said it distracted tourists from the (postcard-perfect) portrait of the terraces," Baguilat said.

Baguilat, former mayor of Kiangan town, was one of several leaders who objected to this tourism plan when it was introduced in 1995.

"I know that tourism is a major commitment to Unesco, but I am focused on the terraces' agricultural and cultural relevance. It is important that whatever changes happen there, these should come from the people. And government must first understand why people no longer use (indigenous houses)," he said.

30,000 bags of smuggled rice seized in Bacolod

BY CARLA P. GOMEZ
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—The Philippine Coast Guard here seized a cargo vessel carrying about 30,000 sacks of suspected smuggled rice worth P22.5 million and placed under temporary restriction the vessel's 15 crew members.

The rice cargo could be as much as 40,600 bags as about 10,600 bags were already unloaded and later recovered at a warehouse in Barangay Singcang in this city, according to Negros Occidental provincial legal officer Rayfrando Diaz.

The MV Murphy, owned by the Aquarius Marine Co. based in Cotabato City, unload the bags of rice Saturday night and hurriedly left the Bredco Port in Bacolod City on the same night without getting the required clearance from the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) here.

PCG-Negros Commander Nestor Altamarino said that the MV Murphy was en route to Palawan when it was intercepted on Sunday at the territorial waters of Guimaras by combined teams of Coast Guard and Air Force personnel on board a military helicopter.

The vessel was ordered to return to Bacolod City and temporarily placed under the PCG's custody pending an investigation by the Bureau of Customs of the rice shipment it unloaded at the Bredco Port.

Altamarino said they also found that the vessel's 15 crew members have no seaman's books, which is a ground for sanctions against them and the vessel's owner. The boat captain was identified as Larry Montebon.

The MV Murphy and its crew were placed under the Coast Guard's custody after Customs Commissioner Titus Villanueva held its departure, Altamirano said.

Board Member Jesus Colmenares, chair of the Provincial Anti-Smuggling Task Force, commended the Coast Guard for their alertness in stopping the entry of smuggled rice in Negros Occidental.

The seized smuggled rice might end up with the poor because President Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered the Bureau of Customs to donate all confiscated rice shipments to the poor and those living in calamity areas.

Villanueva earlier said over dyLA in Cebu City that his office has been coordinating with the Department of Social Welfare and Development to implement the President's order.

Villanueva,however, said only the seized rice that were not sold during the public auction and were not contested in court would be distributed.

In Cebu alone, the Bureau of Customs has seized 70,630 sacks of suspected smuggled rice valued at P56.5 million, which mostly came from Vietnam, from Nov. 5 to Dec. 13 this year.

The Cebu City Council passed a resolution last week urging the national government to release the confiscated bags of rice in favor of the Cebu City government. The council wanted to distribute the confiscated rice to poor families in Cebu City.

Presidential Liaison Officer Elberto Emphasis said President Macapagal would sign an executive order to allow the distribution of confiscated rice to the poor.

Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor and National Food Authority administrator Anthony Abad were drafting the executive order. The President was expected to sign it before Christmas. ***With a report from Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau***

Chinese carrying payroll killed in Ecija heist

CABANATUAN CITY—An accountant of a Chinese construction company was killed Tuesday afternoon when he tried to look at the holdup men who took the payroll money he and his two companions had withdrawn from a bank in San Leonardo town.

Police identified the victim as Wang Gui Lin, 37, of the China Geo Engineering Co. that is building the Jaen-Sta. Rosa Road. The company is based in Barangay Sapan in Jaen town.

Reports said Wang, along with the firm's computer encoder Mary Grace Vallarta and driver Luisito Diaz, withdrew more than P1.2 million from the Philippine National Bank in the city of Gapan shortly after lunch.

On their way out of the city proper, two armed men flagged down and boarded their pickup truck. One of the armed men then took the wheel while the other took the bag containing the payroll money.

Wang was shot twice and died instantly. Police said Wang might have raised his head while the holdup men were leaving the truck.

Police said the armed men alighted from the truck and rode in a van. The van was believed carrying the backup men of the two robbers.

In Carranglan town, four armed men held up Macario Bugis, 65, Monday night and took away the P290,000 he was carrying.

Bugis, a duck raiser, was aboard an Isuzu Elf truck when he was held up. The robbers escaped using a private jeepney that they used to block the path of Bugis' truck. ***Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk***

VIOLATION BELIED

Ceasefire holding in S. Mindanao, says Army

DAVAO CITY—There were no violations of a ceasefire agreement between the Philippine government and communist guerrillas in Southern Mindanao.

Col. Eduardo del Rosario, chief of the 73rd Infantry Battalion, said neither the New People's Army nor the military violated the truce.

Del Rosario's statement came following reports that the military violated its own ceasefire declaration.

Earlier, the Merardo Arce Command-Southern Mindanao Regional Operational Command of the NPA accused the military of violating the ceasefire by conducting military operations inside "territories" of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

The NPA said a platoon of 73rd IB soldiers conducted military operations in Sitio Lubas, Paquibato District on Dec. 13. Also, the rebels claimed that militiamen, organized by the AFP under the 8th Infantry Battalion, entered Sitio Kiman-anaw, Salapawan in Paquibato on the same day.

But Del Rosario denied the allegations, saying "we were not there to conduct hostile actions."

He said the military arrived in the area after residents reported seeing armed rebels.

"The military will never violate the ceasefire declaration. The rebels can enter our camps. I can treat them to lunch and dinner provided they will not bring their firearms," Del Rosario told reporters in a news conference here Monday.

"So far, they (NPA) have no violation," Del Rosario said.

The government has declared a unilateral ceasefire effective Dec. 10 to Jan. 6. The NDF also declared its own ceasefire effective midnight of Dec. 15 to Jan. 6. *Ayan C. Mellejor, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Ex-rebel, dad, brod slain in Tarlac

TARLAC CITY—Young Aileen turned only 2 months old on Wednesday and yet cruel faith has deprived her of a Christmas with her father.

Melchor de los Santos, 27, a rebel returnee, was the father of Aileen who chose to surrender and till a small land of his family in Barangay Timmaguab in Sta. Ignacia town.

On Dec. 7, he was shot dead in front of his mother, wife and other family members.

Also killed in cold blood were De los Santos' father Dominador, 49, and his younger brother Falcon, 21.

On the day he was killed, De los Santos, also known as "Ka Rosa" in the communist movement, was about to file his counter-affidavit denying his involvement in the Nov. 10 burning of telecommunications equipment in Tarlac.

Attacks

New People's Army rebels were believed responsible for the burning of equipment in two relay stations of telecommunications companies in the province after the companies failed to pay revolutionary taxes.

De los Santos was vice unit commander of the NPA before he surrendered to the government in July this year with his common-law wife Criseline Facun, who was then six months pregnant. Facun is also a rebel returnee.

Initial police reports said the suspects were former colleagues of De los Santos in the NPA.

But Serafin Magdiwang, spokesperson of the NPA's Nelson Mesina Command in Tarlac, said it was a "revenge killing" by the police and military in the area.

Chief Insp. Arturo Pabustan and SPO1 Jose Fronda, both of the police's 312th provincial mobile group (PMG), were allegedly killed by NPA rebels for their blood debts.

Waylaid

Pabustan was killed on his way to work in November in La Paz town while Fronda was gunned down while farming in Sta. Ignacia town early this month.

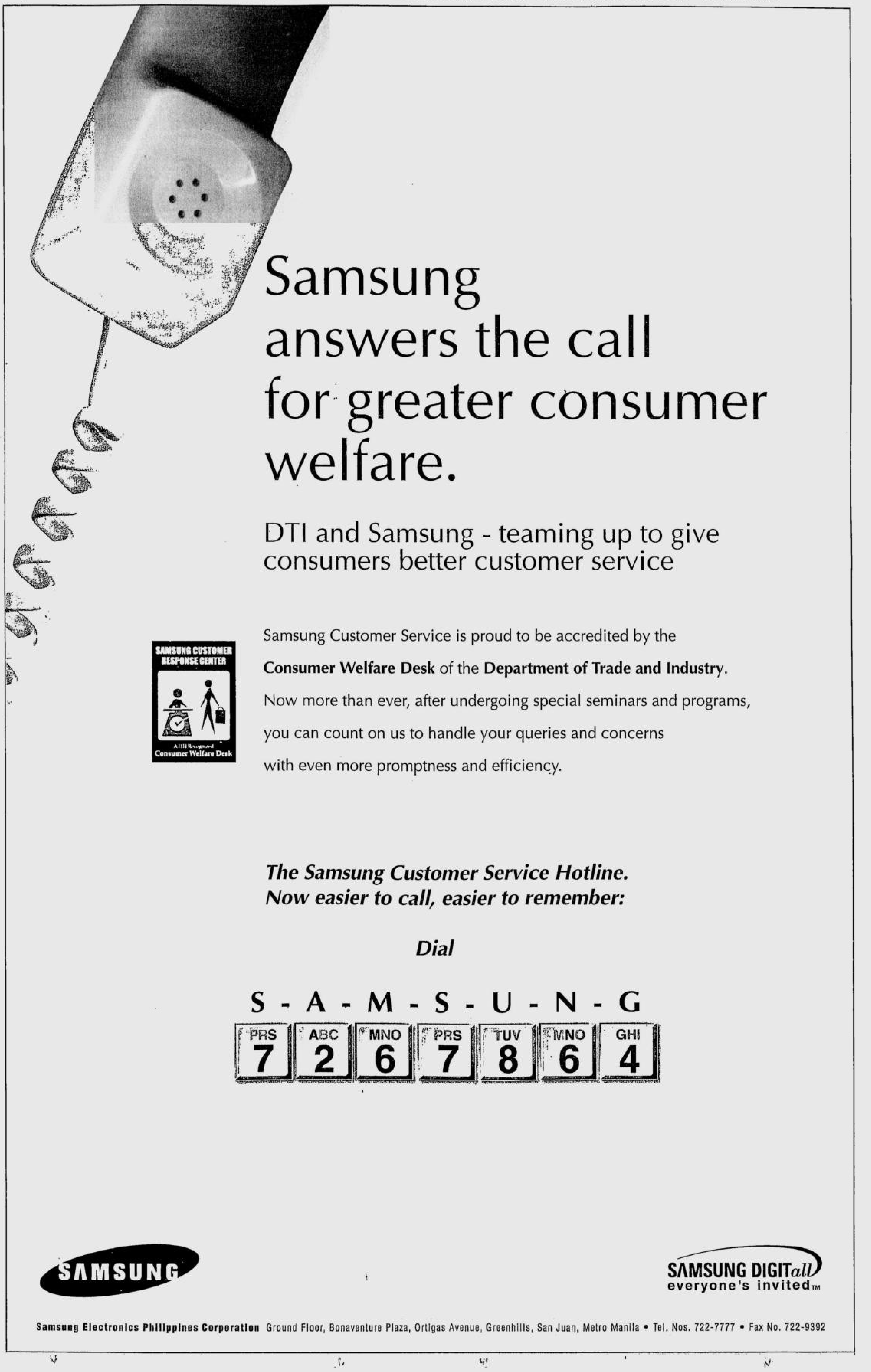
"It was a witch-hunt because the police and military were unable to arrest any suspect in the murder of Pabustan and Fronda," Magdiwang told the INQUIRER on Monday.

But Supt. Mario Sandiego, Tarlac police director, said reports that the assailants of the De los Santoses might be policemen and Army soldiers were "purely speculative."

"We came down (the mountains) because he wanted to have a peaceful life and to prepare for the future of our child," said De los Santos' wife.

She said Melchor showed more resolve in providing a good future for their daughter. "He would till the fields, plant rice and vegetables starting early in the morning until dusk," Facun said in Filipino.

The family refused to talk about the killings, fearing reprisal from the group that killed the De los Santos men. *Ronald Dizon, PDI Central Luzon Desk*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No unity, no coco money

(From page A1)

because these are still frozen. Until the final question of who owns it is solved, you cannot touch it," Avena said.

"But considering that these are prima facie public funds, the stockholders who are represented in these funds can vote (on what to do with the dividends)," she said.

The Supreme Court said last week that the coco levy, collected from coconut farmers from 1973 to 1982, were "prima facie (apparently) public funds."

But the high court said its decision applied only to the right of the PCGG to vote the shares in the United Coconut Planters Bank. The PCGG sequestered the UCPB shares on the grounds that the bank was acquired using the coco levy funds.

The Supreme Court directed the Sandiganbayan to rule within six months on the nature of the funds in connection with Civil Cases No. 33-A, 33-B.and 33-F.

The parties to the cases include the PCGG, Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr., Ma. Clara Lobregat, Juan Ponce Enrile and the Philippine Federation of Coconut Producers (Cocofed).

The PCGG and certain groups of small coconut farmers claim that the coco levies are public funds while Cojuangco's group insists that these are private funds.

A proposed compromise agreement signed by several coconut farmers' groups and Cocofed on Oct. 28 had also sought to use interest earnings from the coco levy funds. But under the deal, which was brokered by President Macapagal-Arroyo's private publicist, Dante Ang, the 27-percent stake in SMC would be sold and the proceeds would be used to put up a perpetual trust fund.

Interest earnings from the trust fund are to be used to benefit coconut farmers and the coconut industry. Under the deal, the farmers are to get 40 percent of the interest earnings, the government 25 percent, and Cocofed 20 percent. Fifteen percent is supposed to revert to the trust fund.

The PCGG has shot down this compromise deal.

Although Malacañang wants to use the P700 million by next month, it is not sure where to fund the money. The President has ordered a search for the dividends, which the Coconut Industry Investment Fund (CIIF) earned in SMC over the past 16 years.

The SMC and the Sandiganbayan should know where the dividends had been deposited, according to Avena. She said these dividends should be in "a certain bank or banks."

"The question is which (bank or banks). I don't think the money was lost. They just cannot see the accounting (of the funds)," she said.

Depository banks

Avena said SMC would not just place the dividends in just one bank, the UCPB.

"It's a matter of looking where these funds are," she said.

Since the funds are supposedly in escrow, the Sandiganbayan should know where these funds have been deposited or placed, according to Avena.

She said the placement of the funds should be regularly reported to the court.

But Avena said she did not know if SMC was reporting the placement to the Sandiganbayan.

Avena also said that the PCGG would study the sale of 15 percent of SMC to Japanese brewer Kirin Co. Ltd. for $540 million before making further comments on the matter.

In Malacañang, Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo indicated that the sale was a done deal except for some legal issues to be resolved by the PCGG and the camp of Cojuangco, the SMC chair.

Romulo met with PCGG Chair Haydee Yorac and other PCGG officials on Tuesday to discuss the government's position on the sale.

Yorac said she could not air her views on the sale as she had not seen the shareholders' agreement entered into between SMC and Kirin.

Speaking of Yorac, Romulo said: "She is going to have a press conference sometime this week so she will spell out the legal issues in light of the Supreme Court decision, but she herself categorically stated that investments are most welcome."

Romulo said the PCGG and representatives of the Cojuangco group would meet anytime soon to thresh out legal issues involved in the Kirin deal.

"We are waiting for the analysis and review of the PCGG," Romulo said.

The PCGG said it would hold separate meetings with SMC and Kirin, together with Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, within the week to review the SMC-Kirin deal.

Camacho's conflict of interest?

Camacho said Kirin had wanted to invest in SMC during the Ramos administration.

"Kirin was interested in investing in San Miguel even during the time of Ramos. This indicates its sincere interest," the finance secretary said.

He disclosed that he had tried to broker a deal between Kirin and SMC when he was still with Bankers Trust, a financial group acquired by Deutsche Bank.

Deutsche Bank is Kirin's financial adviser for the purchase of a 15-percent stake in SMC.

Camacho worked with Bankers Trust since the early 1980s until 1999 and continued working with Deutsche Bank until he was appointed energy secretary by the Macapagal administration.

He said that as much as possible he wanted to inhibit himself from taking part in decisions related to the deal because of his previous involvement with Kirin.

In the Senate, Sen. Ralph Recto urged his colleagues in the chamber to support the SMC-Kirin deal, saying it was worth brewing this time.

"Let's not spoil it," said Recto, chair of the Senate committees on ways and means and on trade and commerce.

"Japan gets to expand its overseas interests through a 15-percent stake in San Miguel. In turn, San Miguel gets not just money but technical infusion and an automatic expansion of its market where Kirin has strong presence," he said.

A fisherfolk group, however, wants the deal scuttled.

Pamalakaya described the deal "as a gentleman's agreement" characterized by "deception, political accommodation and de facto division of coconut levy funds."

"The Supreme Court should shoot down this betrayal of people's trust and public interest," Pamalakaya spokesperson Gerry Albert Corpuz said in a statement. ***With reports from Carlito Pablo, Clarissa S. Batino, Cynthia D. Balana and TJ Burgonio.***

Palace forms body for UCPB takeover

BY CHRISTINE A. GAYLICAN

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has formed a committee to pave the way for the smooth changing of the guards at the United Coconut Planters Bank and the Coconut Industry Investment Fund (CIIF) oil mills.

Danilo Coronacion, Philippine Coconut Authority administrator, said the committee would plot an "orderly transition" so as not to disrupt the operations of the UCPB and the oil mills.

Appointees of former Joseph Estrada to the UCPB and the CIIF oil mills have refused to vacate their posts.

Members of the committee include Representatives from the PCA, Presidential Commission on Good Government, Department of Finance and Office of the Executive Secretary.

Taking control of the UCPB and the oil mills and a thorough audit of their assets are among the measures identified at the Cabinet meeting last Wednesday, according to Gen. Virgilio David, former PCA administrator and now PCA board director.

UCPB officials led by its chair and chief executive officer Jeronimo U. Kilayko met yesterday to ponder on their fate.

Aside from Kilayko, other UCPB directors appointed by former Estrada include Juan J. Carlos, Lorenzo V. Tan, Virgilio Jacinto, Redentor Alegre, Albert Gohu, Andres Narvasa, Romeo Odi, Manuel Pamaran, Rosario Razon, Danilo Reyes, Mila Reforma, Rebecca Ynares and Agustin Salgado Jr.

"So far no direct instructions have been given to us. The employees are used to these changes. What we are guarding against is a sudden bank-run, so we have to maintain the confidence of our depositors despite what has been happening," UCPB's corporate relations officer Jose Gullas said in a separate interview.

US Pinoys send home less dollars, balikbayan boxes

(From page A1)

iting the Philippines.

Cash or box

But last September after the terrorist attacks, area customers who have been laid off began to slash the amount they had been sending back home. "It was a sudden dip," said Jimmy Carino, chairman emeritus of Forex, pioneer remitter and *balikbayan* box shipper operating across the US.

Last month, Forex noted a 34-percent pick-up in its remittance to the Philippines. Reason: Some Filipinos chose to send money instead of balikbayan boxes, lured by the P50 (or more) to $1 exchange rate.

A large box also costs more: $400 to $500. It takes about $300 or more to fill up a large box with new clothes, towels, canned goods, and new toys. The shipment fee is $115 (more for province-bound box), and the sender pays an additional $5 pick-up fee here.

But when laid-off workers realize there are no more unemployment checks in sight, or when more people lose jobs, this will change again.

Impact

"The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the US adversely affected every business enterprise, big or small, " said Carino. "We felt the impact right away—business is down by half," he said.

Remittance fee is based on the amount sent. Carino said their business around the world is still okay, he added, but it's starting to slow down, too. The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and potential threats have a global effect.

Sending $200, not $500

He added: "Some Filipino waiters who work at the Mayflower Hotel, a five-star hotel in D.C., used to send $700 a month or more to their families in the Philippines. The amount forms a large chunk of their tips. Now with tourists afraid to fly, they're sending $200 instead."

There were many Filipino airline staff and airport baggage handlers who lost their jobs when the Ronald Reagan National Airport in Crystal City, Virginia, shut down after the terrorist attacks.

The airport, named after the US president, is close to the Pentagon (Department of Defense). It was one of the targets hit by terrorists who hijacked an American Airlines jet last Sept. 11.

The airport now operates on a limited basis as a security measure. Airline jets can fly over the Pentagon, Congress and the White House within three to five seconds.

Unemployment benefit

Carino did not give the name of an airport worker who used to remit $300 a month. After being laid off in September, the worker still managed to send $75 to his family, taking it from his unemployment check, a benefit which ends after 13 weeks.

"It's so sad how Filipinos like him sacrifice so much, keeping just the essential rent and food expenses for themselves," he said.

Northwest Airline cabin cleaner Edgar Tubilla told the INQUIRER he lost a full-time job. "My union leader said I could transfer to another city or get laid off. I chose the latter, because I'm studying to be an aircraft mechanical engineer here. It's tough. Right now, I'm collecting my unemployment check."

In the Greater Metro D.C. area, composed of Washington and the nearby states of Virginia and Maryland, the 2000 census puts the Filipino population at 76,435, most of them living in Virginia (47,609).

With the undercounted citizens of Philippine ancestry, the figure is closer to 88,000, according to the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NAFFAA). Of this, less than a thousand are OFWs.

Most of the Filipinos and Filipino-Americans in this Metro area kept their jobs. Among them are federal government workers, staff at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), doctors, nurses, lawyers, computer employees, and military servicemen and women.

But they, too, have been budget-conscious, waiting for the other shoe to drop (another terrorist attack, or another wave of layoffs.)

Helen Custodio, labor attaché at the Philippine Embassy here, said figures do not indicate whether the remittances come from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), or from US citizens and permanent residents (green card holders).

Generous

But it is the OFWs here and across the US—3,529 as of the latest available data—who are more generous and diligent about sending remittances.

Seamen and women in shipping lines and cruises based in Florida automatically send 80 percent of their monthly salaries to their families through bank-to-bank arrangements.

But now, with Americans focused on more weighty matters, shipping lines and cruises are on a downtrend.

Domestic workers keep double jobs, save more on rent by working as live-in staff, and earn more than the minimum wage by working at nights or on weekends.

They work as baby-sitters, elderly caregivers, and housekeepers in diplomats' residences or affluent Americans' homes. "Most of them send as much as $1,000 a month to support school-age children and several hard-up relatives," said Cora Macorol, president of the 40-member Sampaguita club in the area.

Some of them lost their jobs or part-time work when their employers got laid off, or lost big in the stock market. One area employer lost $250,000 and cut back on weekend help.

Solution

Forex owner Carino said his company has a tradition of turning crises into opportunities. The company is resorting to innovative promos in its operations in the US and overseas.

Last October, it launched in the Metro area, a $78 Balikbayan *"bulilit"* (small) box packed in the Philippines. If this idea flies, it would mean profits. Cutting shipment costs, the company will buy the goods wholesale in the Philippines. Items such as rice, corned beef, Oreo cookies, chocolates.

Carino is also counting on customer loyalty, developed in close to two decades. The company enjoyed a monopoly in the early '80s until the entry of area competition.

Rivals include remitters such as Travelwise International (which subsequently dropped this service), Visayan International Ventures and individual entrepreneurs, and remitter-shippers Forwarders Intl. and Orient Star. Some have folded up. But Forwarders, which has bigger boxes and competitive rates, has found a following.

Network

Domestic workers are optimistic about bouncing back. They rely on other friends, and gain strength from their faith.

On Sundays, members of Sampaguita and the Mother Butler Guild meet to attend Mass, share potluck luncheon with the priests at this city's St. Anne's church, and clean the altar as part of their volunteer work. Other domestic workers are El Shaddai devotees.

Jocson is the vice president of Samahang Pinagbuklod sa Amerika (SPA) and Luzviminda, organizations composed of community leaders and domestic workers in the Metro D.C. area.

Jocson works for a photographer of Time magazine. She works in the daytime, doing light housekeeping and cooking. When they entertain, her employer and his wife hire caterers. Since March, she has been sending money to send two grandchildren to college and two more in high school.

She told the INQUIRER: "We help each other. We all have families to support back home. So when somebody gets laid off, we find her a job. Maybe it's a baby-sitting job. Or it could be a job as a switchboard operator. Or, a lucky job as a weekend caregiver which pays $16.50 an hour." (The US minimum wage is $6.25 an hour.)

"Right now, we still don't feel the full effects of the economy, my business is still stable," said Algerica Agsunod Hudiec. She is originally from Batanes, Philippines and owns Quality Domestic Services in Arlington, Virginia, some six miles from this US capital. "But you know, I keep hearing from domestic helpers that their bosses are getting laid off…"

Forex owner Carino said that for the first time, Filipino contract workers in the US are beginning to save money for themselves. "They know things are going to get worse before they get better," he added. "But all of us are optimistic things are going to work out."

Going on with their lives

And Fil-Americans have not lost that fiesta spirit. Picture this: Lorenzo and Wincelia Hipolito dancing as their grown-up children, grandchildren and guests watched and applauded.

This was a week after the terrorists' attack.

"We couldn't forego celebrating my wife's 75th birthday, the children wouldn't hear of it," said Lorenzo as he relished the scene in Colma Manor hall, Cottage City in Maryland, located 12 miles from this capital city.

"We didn't want to celebrate this year, but it's a family tradition to party on anniversaries," the World War II veteran added.

And since the attacks on America, a patriotic thing to do. President George W. Bush said so himself: Be vigilant, but go on with your lives.

Americans have been trying to strike a balance between going on with their lives and staying alert.

Said Ashley Barron of TCI Co., an event planner company located a block and a half away from the White House: "Sure I'm concerned, but I'm confident President Bush has the situation under control. Getting scared, that's not the American away. Because if you do that, they win."

Postal workers

Filipino-Americans working at the US Postal Service take precautions against anthrax. A female postal worker at the Northern Virginia office, who asked not to be named, bought her own surgical mask and latex gloves, and endured teasing from co-workers for being overcautious.

The following day, it was her turn to laugh when workers were told by inspection teams to start using surgical masks and thick, blue gloves that extended near the elbows. She said they were told to change the gloves three times a day. She changes hers "every two hours."

"And if you asked to be tested if you're positive for anthrax or not, they do it right away, so we have peace of mind," she said.

Eldy Roldan, for 18 years a letter carrier in Milpitas, California, is thinking of retirement. He said he was attending a retirement seminar this week—"just to know what the pros and cons are."

Like the Filipina postal worker in this Metro area, Roldan also took the precaution of buying his own dust mask and latex gloves before his office adopted the safety measures. "They were ribbing me and calling me Doctor Eldy. I said, go ahead and laugh now—it's possible I'll have the last laugh."

Congress

A Filipino-American congressional staff told the INQUIRER: "I cannot speak for the others. But I feel secure in the Capitol. The authorities have stepped up the security and taken precautions. I'm confident the experts know what they're doing. I'm trying to focus on the work we have to do."

He said he was more scared of handling his personal mail at home.

He requested not to be identified, "because if I did, I'd have to go through a media procedure."

Parents

Family and flag—which people display in front of their house or car windows—that's what America is all about now. Journalist and author Sally Quinn wrote about her and other Washingtonians' search for expensive gas masks for their families.

She told the INQUIRER at a reception for international journalists: "I'm not scared, but I want my family protected. They say even a disposable surgical mask can help. You can even buy one in the stores for a dollar."

Her husband, Ben Bradlee, also talked more as a parent than a journalist. He is the Washington Post managing editor when it toppled President Richard M. Nixon over Watergate.

"You see, we have this son, and he lives out of town," he said in a separate conversation at the reception. "We're very worried about him."

He added, unbelieving, "The other day I flew from D.C. on the New York shuttle, a 45-minute flight. The stewardess said something like, 'If anyone as much as stands even if it's just to go to the lavatory, the plane would change course and land in a different airport.'"

Is this uncertain time similar to when JFK and Nikita Kruschev were on the verge of pushing the nuclear button during the Cuban missile crisis?

Quinn shook her head. "That was different and seems so long ago. Back then we knew who the enemy was, and it was also a conventional warfare."

Setback for Asian Americans

Karen Narasaki, executive director of the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (Napalc), a civil rights group, is more concerned about issues on immigration and freedom versus safety and security.

She is the daughter of Japanese Americans who were interned in camps on orders of President Franklin D. Roosevelt during World War II.

In the '90s, the US issued an apology and awarded internees $25,000 each as reparation.

"Their experience taught me to be vigilant if I want to prevent something like that from happening again," she told the INQUIRER.

She has joined other Filipino Americans and other Asian Americans in denouncing the murder and other violence against turban-wearing Indian Sikhs, Arab Americans and other Muslim Americans in the country.

She said: "Before Sept. 11,we were making progress on our proposals to relax policies on reuniting siblings. For example, it's ridiculous that it takes Filipinos 22 years to get reunited with their brothers and sisters here in America. People cannot be separated from the people they love for years. This is one of the causes of undocumented or illegal aliens."

American spirit

D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams is confident everything will be all right. He told the INQUIRER, "On Sept. 11 we did not have a coordinated federal and city government emergency plan. We have one now. I have formed an anti-terrorist task force in the district."

He added: "I'm in awe of the great spirit shown by Washingtonians, and indeed by all Americans. I have no doubt we will prevail in the end."

Community leader Cora Macorol relies on her faith. "I'm not afraid to die. If it's God's will, why be afraid? I inherited my father's strong faith. I don't read the Bible daily like him. But I pray a lot, and that works for me."

Bishop tells Erap: Accept reality

(From page A1)

Edsa II was all about," he said. "He has not yet learned that his own actions were the cause, Edsa II was merely the effect."

The influential prelate's remarks came in the wake of Estrada's request for a Christmas furlough.

Estrada should stop demanding special treatment, the archbishop of Dagupan said.

At the Sandiganbayan, defense lawyers in the Estrada plunder case tried to negotiate a deal for Estrada's son and co-accused, former San Juan Mayor Jinggoy Estrada.

Lawyer Rene Saguisag proposed a "middle ground" to the anti-graft court's third division, so it won't have to comply with an ultimatum issued Tuesday by the Supreme Court. The deadline calls for the division to resolve the bail petition not later than tomorrow morning.

Saguisag suggested that the court grant Jinggoy a Christmas furlough in view of his heart ailment "and then have a full-blown non-hurried resolution (on the bail petition) after the New Year."

He again broached the idea of a furlough despite the court's rejection last week of the previous motion for lack of merit.

But Plunder Watch, a civil society group following the plunder trial, laughed off the idea. According to Plunder Watch convenor Carolina Araullo, allowing Jinggoy to go home in time for the traditional *noche buena* (midnight meal) would only make matters worse for his heart.

Erap's lamentations

"The worst is treated infinitely better than the bad! Why?" Cruz asked in an interview with CBCP reporters.

Although he said he understood Estrada's "lamentations" about his predicament, Cruz said his "mind goes to the hundreds of people behind bars also now undergoing trial."

"Why can't they also be housed in the best hospitals? Why can't they likewise have the best doctors, the best lawyers, the best security?" he said. "Why don't they also try asking for Christmas vacations?"

For Cruz, the argument that Estrada was a former President and is thus entitled to VIP treatment simply did not wash.

"It is bad when one common *tao* is accused of a big crime, but it is worse when a former President is accused of a bigger one," he said.

Detained since April, the disgraced President has been enjoying relative comfort at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center, attended by the best doctors in the country and visited by a steady stream of well-heeled friends and former government officials.

Cruz asked Estrada to get a reality check, and to accept the fact that he is a suspected criminal facing serious charges which cost him his post.

The Church leader said it was time for the Estradas to own up to their crimes, instead of proclaiming their innocence or blaming others for their sins.

"One's innocence is not established by blaming everybody else, except oneself. One does not become good simply because everybody else is bad," he said.

Bended knees

In a manifestation filed yesterday, Saguisag "sought and prayed for (the proposed concession) on bended knees."

Jinggoy's motion for temporary liberty and bail rested largely on his lawyers' contention that he needs a release from the stressful conditions of detention, which according to his doctor has aggravated his heart condition.

Jinggoy and his father share a suite at the VMMC in Quezon City.

Saguisag noted that no other physician has "rebutted" the medical findings made by Jinggoy's cardiologist, Dr. Roberto Anastacio of the Makati Medical Center.

Anastacio had previously notified the court that a hospital environment was too stressful for his patient, who needs to be returned to a "normal environment"—that is, home.

Since Dec. 16, Jinggoy has been confined at the MMC, after he suffered chest pains and shortness of breath.

Jinggoy's favor

Araullo urged the Sandiganbayan to "do Jinggoy a favor and keep him confined in the hospital" during the holidays.

"If he is indeed in a life-threatening situation and is prone to heart attack, it is both common sense and sound medical advice that the best place for him to stay is the hospital," Araullo said.

She explained that Jinggoy, if allowed to go back to his residence in Greenhills, San Juan, would only be pampered by his family.

"At home, Jinggoy can eat and drink to his heart's content. There's a big possibility that he would return to his former flamboyant lifestyle which apparently caused his sorry medical state," Araullo said.

She also said there was "nothing new with this latest ploy to get out of detention," referring to Jinggoy's motion.

"Plunder is a non-bailable crime, period. The only legal, moral and politically correct decision that the Sandiganbayan should take is to trash Jinggoy's motion," Araullo said.

"Obviously, Jinggoy is trying to play up the emotions of the public in order to go back to Polk Street in time for *noche buena*," she added.

She expressed hope that the Sandiganbayan justices who will decide on the motion would "not fall prey to the Estrada lawyers' legal acrobatics." ***With reports from Volt Contreras and Agnes Donato***

Davide plays Santa, gets cheers, jeers

DAVIDE

(From page A1)

For suspended Presiding Justice Francis Garchitorena and for Nazario, P40,000 each. For the 12 other Associate Justices manning the court's five divisions, P25,000 each.

Extra bonus

Nazario wrote a separate letter seeking an "extra Christmas bonus" for the court's rank and file at P5,000 each, or a total package of P1.48 million, about four times the total granted to the judges. This extra bonus was also approved by Davide on Tuesday.

The disparity between the employees' bonus and that of the magistrates gave the court's labor union reason to gripe.

"The justices have big salaries already, so why still grant them this much and then scrimp on the lowly employees?" asked Maurino Aguilar, president of the Sandiganbayan Employees Association.

The additional bonus was granted at a time when the Sandiganbayan is facing intense public scrutiny. Some of the highly publicized issues that placed the court's performance and the conduct of some of its officials under a cloud include:

An SC-initiated audit that revealed the backlog of Sandiganbayan cases and led to the six-month relief of first division chair and Presiding Justice Garchitorena.

The open bickering between Garchitorena and Justice Anacleto Badoy, chair of the third division, that prompted the SC to slap them both with a gag order in November.

And the pending administrative complaints against Badoy, who presides over the historic Estrada plunder trial and is now on forced leave upon orders of the SC.

'Blasphemous' calendar irks Muslims

(From page A1)

Islam is a monotheistic religion. In declaring their faith, Muslims state: "There is no god worthy to be worshipped but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

But Marron said: "We didn't have any bad intention. We just wanted to give the people our calendar and, at the same time, feature different scenic spots in the country. In doing so, we inadvertently committed that mistake of putting Muhammad in the caption instead of Allah."

'Incalculable'

Lingga said, "what Mercury Drug attacked is the foundation of faith in Islam."

"The effect of this in the people's understanding of Islam is incalculable," he said. "The effect also to Muslims is unimaginable (because) they are depicted as worshippers of a human being."

Lingga also said the drug chain could have easily checked with many Muslim institutions before finalizing the layout featuring the mosque.

"It is hard to believe that this was committed out of ignorance of Islam," he said.

Asked how they thought they could rectify the error, Mercury Drug's Marron said the company had decided to remove the offending feature.

But he pointed out that "the other parts of the calendar are still useful and educational."

Marron also said the company decided to issue the letter of apology after being informed by an undersecretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government of the many complaints that had been made.

The BPCA serves as a venue for Filipino Muslims to air their sentiments on pressing issues. It recently converged in Maguindanao, where some 200,000 Muslims passed a resolution urging the United Nations to grant the Bangsamoro the right to establish a separate state in Southern Philippines. *With a report from Doris C. Dumlao*

'40-day

(From page A1)

excitement by putting out these rumors," he said.

But the rumors have "no basis whatsoever in fact," he said, adding: "That's my info not only from the military but also from other sources."

Last October, coup rumors also circulated.

'No' votes

Although protest actions against Estrada had been widespread nationwide, it was the slim victory of the "No" votes at his impeachment trial that triggered People Power II.

On the night of Jan. 16 the senator-judges voted 11-10 against opening a second envelope of bank documents supposedly showing Estrada's secret accounts.

Within hours thousands gathered at the Edsa Shrine to protest. The crowd grew bigger as the days wore on and did not leave until Estrada left Malacanang on the morning of Jan. 20 and then Vice President Macapagal-Arroyo took her oath as the Philippines' 14th President at the Edsa Shrine.

Same low fares for the holidays!

ORIGIN: MANILA

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
CEBU	5J - 557	Daily	0130	0240	P2,608	P2,309
	5J - 559	Daily	0500	0610		
	5J - 561	Daily	0700	0810		
	5J - 563	Daily	0900	1010		
	5J - 565	Daily	1100	1210		
	5J - 567	Daily	1300	1410		
	5J - 569	Daily	1500	1610		
	5J - 571	Daily	1700	1810		
	5J - 573	Daily	1900	2010		
DAVAO	5J - 961	Daily	0430	0610	P3,307	P2,919
	5J - 963	Daily	1010	1150		
	5J - 965	Daily	1210	1350		
	5J - 967	Daily	1500	1640		
	5J - 969	Daily	1700	1840		
CAGAYAN de ORO	5J - 381	Daily	0510	0635	P3,295	P2,919
	5J - 383	Daily	0930	1055		
	5J - 385	Daily	1325	1450		
TACLOBAN	5J - 651	Daily	0610	0720	P2,718	P2,419
	5J - 655	Daily	1210	1320		
	5J - 657	Daily	1400	1510		
ILOILO	5J - 451	Daily	0505	0605	P2,498	P2,199
	5J - 455	Daily	0955	1055		
*Operational from 14-23 December 2001 only	5J - 457*	M/W/F/Sun	1310	1410		
	5J - 459	Daily	1600	1700		
BACOLOD	5J - 473	M/W/F/Sun	0510	0610	P2,498	P2,199
	5J - 473	Tu/Th/Sat	0620	0720		
	5J - 475	Daily	1000	1100		
*Operational from 14-23 December 2001 only	5J - 477*	Tu/Th/Sat	1310	1410		
	5J - 479	Daily	1640	1740		
ZAMBOANGA	5J - 851	Daily	0520	0650	P3,295	P2,639
ROXAS	5J - 373	Daily	0530	0630	P2,279	P1,979
DUMAGUETE	5J - 627	Daily	1340	1450	P2,608	P2,309
KALIBO	5J - 339	Daily	0900	0950	P2,608	P2,309
	5J - 341*	Daily	1330	1420		

*Operational from 21 Dec 2001 to 06 Jan 2002 only

ORIGIN: CEBU

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 558	Daily	0400	0510	P2,608	P2,309
	5J - 560	Daily	0700	0810		
	5J - 562	Daily	0900	1010		
	5J - 564	Daily	1100	1210		
	5J - 566	Daily	1300	1410		
	5J - 568	Daily	1500	1610		
	5J - 570	Daily	1700	1810		
	5J - 572	Daily	1900	2010		
	5J - 574	Daily	2100	2210		
DAVAO	5J - 593	Daily	0800	0850	P2,339	P2,039
	5J - 597	Daily	1450	1540		
ZAMBOANGA	5J - 431	W/Th/Sat	0905	1000	P2,388	P2,089
ILOILO	5J - 164	Daily	1750	1825	P1,799	P1,599
BACOLOD	5J - 126	M/W/F/Sun	0810	0840	P1,599	P1,399
CLARK	5J - 588	M/W/F/Sun	1050	1210	P2,995	P2,669

ORIGIN: DAVAO

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 962	Daily	0720	0900	P3,307	P2,919
	5J - 964	Daily	1230	1410		
	5J - 966	Daily	1430	1610		
	5J - 968	Daily	1720	1900		
	5J - 970	Daily	1920	2100		
CEBU	5J - 594	Daily	0930	1020	P2,339	P2,039
	5J - 598	Daily	1620	1710		
ILOILO *via Cebu	5J - 598/164*	Daily	1620	1825	P3,295	P2,839
ZAMBOANGA	5J - 393	Tu/F/Sun	0910	1010	P2,388	P2,089

ORIGIN: CLARK

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
CEBU	5J - 589	M/W/F/Sun	1300	1420	P2,995	P2,669

ORIGIN: CAGAYAN DE ORO

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 382	Daily	0715	0840	P3,295	P2,919
	5J - 384	Daily	1135	1300		
	5J - 386	Daily	1530	1655		

ORIGIN: TACLOBAN

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 652	Daily	0800	0910	P2,718	P2,419
	5J - 656	Daily	1400	1510		
	5J - 658	Daily	1550	1700		

ORIGIN: ILOILO

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 456	Daily	1135	1235	P2,498	P2,199
*Operational from 14-23 December 2001 only	5J - 458*	M/W/F/Sun	1450	1550		
	5J - 460	Daily	1740	1840		
	5J - 462	Daily	1905	2005		
CEBU	5J - 161	Daily	0645	0720	P1,799	P1,599
DAVAO *via Cebu	5J - 161/593*	Daily	0645	0850	P3,295	P2,839

ORIGIN: BACOLOD

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 474	M/W/F/Sun	0930	1030	P2,498	P2,199
	5J - 474	Tu/Th/Sat	0810	0910		
	5J - 476	Daily	1150	1250		
*Operational from 14-23 December 2001 only	5J - 478*	Tu/Th/Sat	1450	1600		
	5J - 480	Daily	1830	1930		
CEBU	5J - 125	M/W/F/Sun	0700	0730	P1,599	P1,399

ORIGIN: ZAMBOANGA

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 852	Mon	0730	0900	P3,295	P2,639
	5J - 852	Tu-Sun	1050	1220		
CEBU	5J - 432	W/Th/Sat	0730	0825	P2,388	P2,089
DAVAO	5J - 394	Tu/F/Sun	0730	0830	P2,388	P2,089

ORIGIN: ROXAS

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 374	Daily	0710	0810	P2,279	P1,979

ORIGIN: DUMAGUETE

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 628	Daily	1530	1640	P2,608	P2,309

ORIGIN: KALIBO

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 340	Daily	1030	1120	P2,608	P2,309
	5J - 342*	Daily	1500	1550		

*Operational from 21 Dec 2001 to 05 Jan 2002 only

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

FROM	- TO	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA
MANILA	- HONGKONG	5J - 112	Daily	0850	1050
		5J - 118	Daily	1640	1840
HONG KONG -	MANILA	5J - 113	Daily	1150	1350
		5J - 119	Daily	1940	2140

NOTES:
- *All fares are subject to government approval and are exclusive of government tax.*
- *Child's fare and other regular discounts are applicable to Normal Fares only.*
- *Insurance surcharge of P300 per sector is applicable to all fare types.*
- *All fares and schedules are effective 14 December 2001.*
- *All fares and schedules are subject to change without prior notice.*

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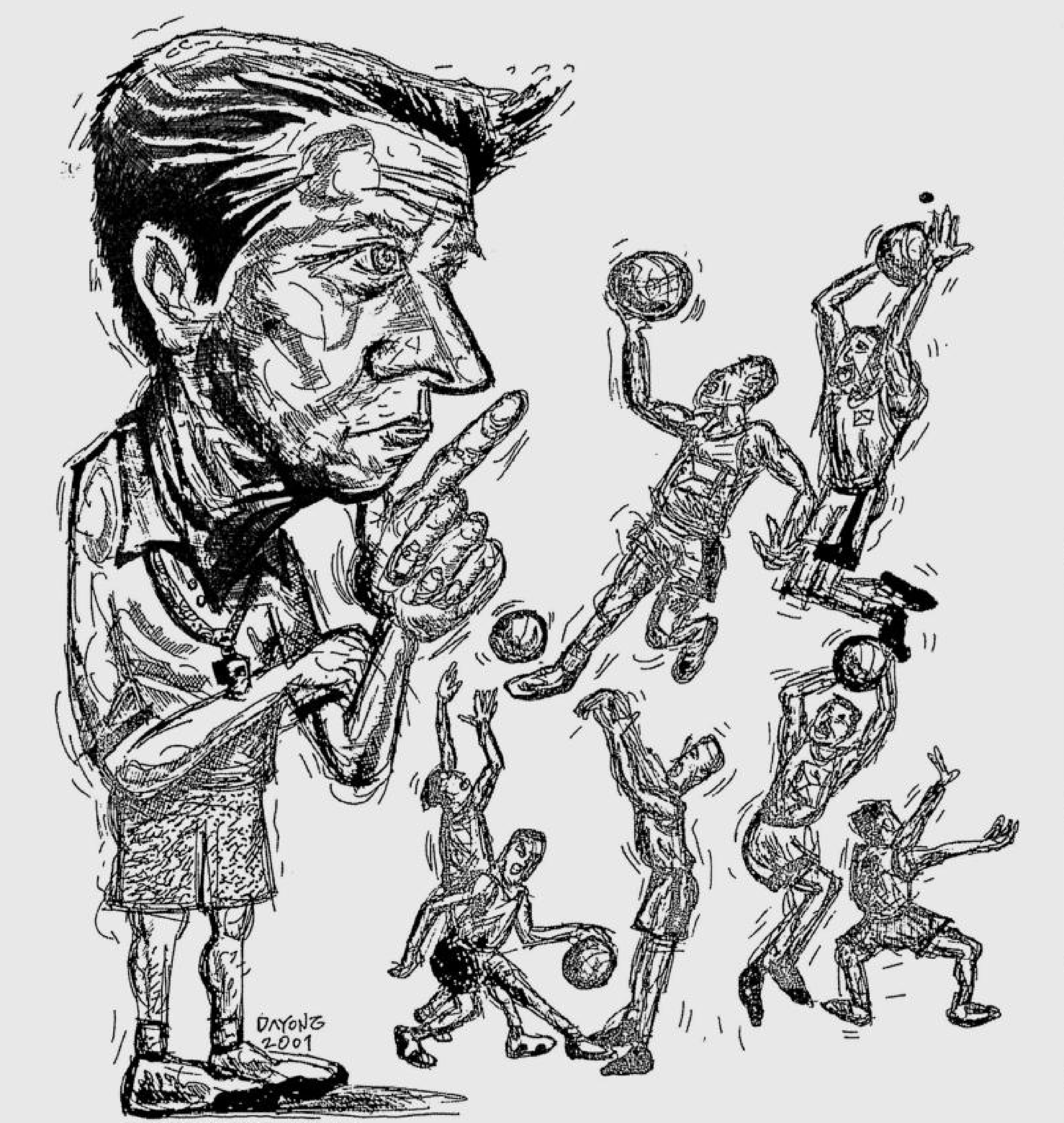


ILLUSTRATION/DAYONG J. MENDOZA

PBA okays 2 imports per team

By June Navarro

ASIAN Games coach Ron Jacobs got his wish Tuesday night after the PBA Board of Governors allowed teams to have two imports during next year's Commissioner's Cup.

Jacobs earlier requested the board to grant each team the benefit of having two imports regardless of how many players would be named to the PBA-backed national squad.

The 10-man board ruled in Jacobs' favor as it argued that imports elevate the level of competition needed by the national team when it plunges to the Pusan, South Korean meet in September next year.

Originally, the PBA allowed teams to have two imports with a combined height of 13 feet should they lend two or more players to the national squad.

If a team releases one or none, it would be allowed to acquire an import with unlimited height in the Commissioner's Cup, the first conference of the 2002 PBA season.

Jacobs, however, argued that chances are a team or two would have no representation at all since the Board limited the number of PBA players who could join the training team to only 18.

The imbalance, nonetheless, would be calibrated once each team gets two imports to level the playing field and provide stiff competition to the two training teams slated to compete in the Commissioner's Cup, Jacobs added.

"But having two imports is optional because we have to consider the financial implications of such move," said PBA Commissioner Jun Bernardino.

He added it would be a good form of training as the national squad should get used to playing against tall cagers in the Asian Games with opponents like Lebanon, Korea and China.

PSA picks Ildefonso as top pro

ILDEFONSO

DANNY Ildefonso, the pro-league's most imposing player during the year, joins an elite cast of sports greats who will be honored by the Philippine Sportswriters Association during its traditional PSA Annual Awards Jan. 11 at the Holiday Inn Manila.

Ildefonso was the unanimous choice as the best in professional basketball in 2001 after he won his second PBA Most Valuable Player award aside from copping three conference titles in the season.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has been invited to be the guest of honor and speaker during the Awards Night of the country's oldest news organization.

The Awards Night is sponsored by Photokina Marketing and supported by the Philippine Sports Commission.

The President will confer the Most Outstanding Athlete awards in world billiards champion Efren "Bata" Reyes and Fil-American golfer Dorothy Joy Delasin as well as to Ildefonso and other winners of the PSA's Major Awards.

Other major awardees initially voted by the PSA during its board of directors' meeting are Manny Pacquiao (pro boxing), Eduardo Buenavista (athletics), Liza del Rosario (bowling), Wind Blown (horse of the year) and Roberto Cruz (taekwondo).

The PSA is still deliberating on the nominees for other major awards.

Pacquiao, 22, was unbeaten in four fights this year. He stopped Lehlo Ledwaba to wrest the IBF 122-pound crown in Las Vegas in June and drew with rule-breaker Agapito Sanchez of the Dominican Republic in a title defense in November.

In only his second year in the Southeast Asian Games, Buenavista, 22, shocked the opposition by winning the 3,000-meter steeplechase and the 5,000m run to become the only Filipino double gold medalist in the Kuala Lumpur SEA Games.

Del Rosario, who won the doubles gold in bowling in partnership with Arianne Cerdena in the KL SEAG, reached the finals of the prestigious World Cup of bowling in Patthava, Thailand.

Wind Blown won the year's major stakes races—the Gran Copa de Manila, Breeders' Cup, Founders' Cup and the season ending Presidential Gold Cup—to earn local horseracing's honor as horse of the year.

Competing in the finweight division in taekwondo, Cruz posted a rare record in Philippine sports by winning the SEA games gold in his category in Kuala Lumpur. It was his sixth straight since the 1991 SEA Games in Manila.

Ateneo, Davao cagers prevail

ATENEO de Manila and Holy Child of Davao emerged the country's best youth basketball squads by winning the recent Milo BEST SBP/Passerelle national championships at the Philsports Arena.

The Ateneans nipped Cebu's University of San Carlos, 70-68, to grab the SBP crown, while Holy Child toppled USC anew, 89-80, in a repeat of last year's Passerelle finals.

Meynard Padernal drove strong for a left baseline layup with five seconds left to lift the Ateneans to victory. Padernal topscored for the champs with 26 points.

Rodel Ramises sparkled for Holy Child, finishing with 20 points.

Cagayan de Oro's Xavier University and USC-Cebu bagged the SBP and Passerelle sportsmanship awards, respectively.

FIRST GAME (Passerelle):

HOLY CHILD (89)—Ramises 20, Somoso 13, Etrone 9, Won g8, Guanino 8, Hermosisima 7, Naizamo 6, Asilum 6, Deria 4, Ebarola 4, Doromal 2, Pepito 2, Rosete 0, Lao 0, Manguilmotan 0

USC (80)—Macaraya 20, Yagaya 12, Demecillo 10, Salon 10, Esteban 7, Elemino 4, Guile 4, Platero 4, Kor 4, Omped 2, Garcia 2, Singco 2, Lim 1, Gallarde 0, Mercado 0

SECOND GAME (SBP):

ATENEO (70)—Padernal 26, Balmaceda 18, Claustro 9, Rivera 6, Gamboa 4, Buenconsejo 3, Enriquez 2, Dumrique 2, Reyes 0, Quiogue 0, Maderal 0, Katipunan 0, Aytona 0, De Dios 0, Sollano 0

USC (68)—Padilla 32, Alforque 13, Bucayan 6, Salomon 6, Pacana 3, Codilla 3, Marano 0, Mroales 2, Cuico 1, Esteban 0, Gabison 9, Sepe 0, Yagaya 0, Sagballa 0.

'Pasko sa Pasay' derby on tomorrow

SUBMISSION of official entries to the "Pasko Na Sa Pasay 4-Cock Derby" is set for today at the Pasay City Cockpit. Entries will be accepted from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.

The blockbuster event being hosted by pit manager Eric dela Rosa fires off tomorrow, Friday. More than 140 fights are in store for aficionados.

"Just like in last July's PCC Anniversary Derby (156 fights), the derby will start at exactly 1 p.m. on Friday. We have to start early because of the big number of fights," Dela Rosa said.

At stake is a whopping prize of P500,000 while entry fee is P8,800.

The "Pasko" derby is one of Pasay Cockpit's two major events every year. The other one is the Anniversary derby that falls on the month of July.

For inquiries, call 816-6750, 843-1890 and 843-1746.

Pinoy archers set 3 records

FILIPINO archers established three national records as they missed winning the team gold medal by a solitary point in the recent Asian championships in Hong Kong.

Led by Raul Ramon Arambulo and Don Bosco student Earl J. Yap, the Filipinos have to settle for the silver medal after they lost 216-217 to Chinese Taipei in the exciting finals of the compound event, which was included in the Asian program for the first time.

The 40-year-old Arambulo set two of the marks, while Yap, 17-year-old high school senior, accounted for one during the qualifying round.

Arambulo shot 336 and 344 points in the 70- and 30-meter distances, respectively, while Yap tallied 165 points for 18 arrows.

The old marks were 330 (70 meters) set by Manuel Martinez is Beijing last September, 343 (30 meters) posted by Clint Sayo one year ago and 160 (18 arrows) also chalked up by Martinez in Shah Alam, Malaysia last October.

"Our archers did very well. I could not ask for more," said coach Bernard Yap. Archery president Ramon Lim, team manager and AAF Congress delegate, echoed Yap's view.

Arambulo ranked seventh in the individual event with 1311, while Yap was 10th at 1279. Two other RP archers–Adam Jimenez III and Nestor de Castro–carded 1214 and 1062, respectively, to rank 13th and 16th.

Arambulo also holds the RP records of 330 points for 50 meters, 1325 for single Fita round and 112 for 12 arrows. On the other hand, Yap also owns the 90-meter distance mark of 315 points.

Singapore took the bronze by beating Hong Kong, 210-193, in the team.

5 share NCA plum

FIVE entries emerged joint winners by posting four points Tuesday in the fund-raising NCA (National Cockers Association) 5-Cock Derby at the Araneta Coliseum.

Sharing top honors in the one-day affair were battle-tested Thunderbird Firefly I of Big Dome owner Nene Araneta, Firefly Thunderbird 13 of the Firefly Group, upcoming R&B Farm I of Rep. Claude Bautista, newest member of the prestigious NCA Central Committee, and veteran Bobyboy Roa, Spencer sa Cainta Jan. 5 5-Cock of William Co and Mulawin of Frank Berin and Rep. Rudy Albano while finishing close behind were Clear Cut San Francisco of Pampanga's Madlambayan brothers and Ruel Feliciano and Combine Harvester of Johnny Jalandoni of Negros Occidental.

Cat Stingers of Tarlac's longtime partners Peping Cojuangco and Esting Teopaco, Binangonan MK of three-time Rizal Gov. Ito Ynares and Manny Kho, BPZ Sunshine of Boy Primallon, Jinfer of Pampanga's champion cockers Jun and Rudy Jingco and Jet Fernando and J Cap of Johan Capinpin all scored three points and landed in the money.

The NCA takes holiday break and resumes on Jan. 14 and 16 with another NCA 7-Cock Derby hosted by Makati Mayor Jojo Binay, Vice Mayor Nestor Mercado, William Co and Dicky Lim. This will be followed by the star-studded 2002 World Slasher 8-cock Derby on Jan. 21, 23 and 25, with Nene Araneta, Gov. Ito Ynares and the Firefly Group as hosts.

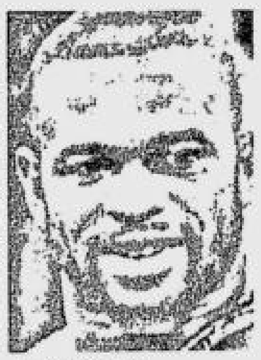
Cruz rules youth chess

SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD Franz Enrico Cruz drew his fifth and final match against Carlos Feliciano after 42 moves of a Sicilian-Najdorf variation to rule the junior division in the final evaluation tournament of the 2001 Milo Checkmate clinic over the weekend at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex.

Cruz, a freshman student at San Sebastian College, finished with a final score of four wins and one draw after five rounds of play to claim the junior title in the age-group competition culminating the clinic's last seven consecutive Saturday chess classes for this year.

Ten-year-old Emmanuel Eumir Songcuya II won the 10-under division with a final tally of six points, with six wins and one loss while 6-year-old Jan Emmanuel Garcia stamped a perfect record of seven points to win the 8-under bracket.

Jones defends titles Feb. 2



JONES JR.

MIAMI—Roy Jones Jr.'s rap video, "Y'all Must've Forgot," delivers a message from the light heavyweight champion: He's the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world.

The video, shown Tuesday at a news conference announcing his Feb. 2 fight against Australian Glen Kelly, features Jones flanked by two bikini-clad women, or scowling and boasting about his past victories, or hitting the heavy bag.

Jones feels talk of other fighters - first Felix Trinidad, now Bernard Hopkins - as the best boxers in the world needs silencing.

"That's why I made 'Y'all Must've Forgot,"' he said.

"They ain't chopping down this tree," Jones added. "This is a slick tree, one that moves away from the ax."

Jones will his defend the WBC, WBA and IBF titles against Kelly in Miami, a city with a storied boxing tradition that has only recently resumed playing host to marquee fights.

"There's a big boxing community here," said Jones, who is from Pensacola and is known for taking his bouts outside Las Vegas. "My thing is to take prime-time boxing where people never expect it to be."

Jones, 45-1 with 36 KOs, said he wants to remind WBO light heavyweight champion Dariusz Michalczewski, undefeated in 45 fights, that he's waiting for him in the United States for a title bout.

Michalczewski, a Polish-born fighter who trains in Germany and fights in Europe, has defended his title 20 times.

AP

RACING TIPS

AT SAN LAZARO By Mr. 999

Race 1—1. Uzisaki 2. Empire Girl 3. Adrenalin 4. Perfect Gift/Baby My Beloved 5. Grand Prize 6. Cool Under Fire

Race 2—1. Aim for Gold 2. Queen of Less 3. Wing Commander 4. Medal's Slew 5. Color of the Wind

Race 3—1. Kathy Rose 2. Imus Emperor 3. Noble Heart

Race 4—1. Top Mark/Proud Spirit 2. Sweep Away 3. Air Express 4. Millennium Man 5. Rapid Strike 6. Queen Jamie

Race 5—1. Magic Fingers 2. Jackpot 3. Rock's Dragon 4. Little Red

Race 6—1. Sealed With A Kiss 2. Winning Post 3. Southern Skies 4. Samahan 5. Spirited Lady

Race 7—1. Snake Dancer 2. Sunny View 3. Impeccable 4. Kamahalan 5. Fire Task 6. Mighty Swift

Race 8—1. Real Dancer 2. Big Boss 3. Aly Sam 4. Kingair 5. Big Kahuna

Race 9—1. Top Dancer 2. Kiss Me Quick 3. Gambatte 4. Woman's task 5. Southern Glory 6. Hong Kong Girl

Jovie leads Speedfest winners

SHELL Motocross Team leader and seven-time champion Jovie Saulog, expert rider Eboy Farr and novice rider Nonoy Abonita topped the highly successful Shell Advance-MP Speedfest 2001 Motocross Races held in Subic Freeport recently.

The forever competitive Saulog won both motos in style with Shell teammate Ernie Leongson finishing in second after a tight battle in the first moto that saw Saulog take a wheel's lead in the final table top jump. Leongson's charge in the decisive second moto was equally impressive until a rear flat tire in the middle of the heat paved the way for Saulog to cruise to victory. Both riders, with Expert winner Eboy Farr, constantly thrilled the crowd with triple and double jumps that rose thirty feet in the air.

MP Turbo Speedfest 2001 was a 4-leg multi-motorsports event held in cooperation with the SBMA under the auspices of the honorable chair Felicito Payumo. The all-in-one motorsport event is sponsored by shell Advance, Zed, Gulf Oil, BLTBCo, Gatorade, Daye Motorcycles, Timex Watches, Gandour Candies, Universal Motors Corp. Francisco Motors Corp., SMA Fuels Inc., Pepsi, the Subic LeMans Kart Track, YRS, American Hardware & and SVI/Subic International Raceway.

Farr bested the other expert riders with a hard charge that kept him far from the reaches of second placer Aldein Valencia and Nonoy Abonita in third. However, the second generation rider Valencia made his family proud when he topped the Beginners Production Category while Abonita also took top honors in the Novice Open Production.

Veteran Nani Pazcoguin also became one of the top riders when he dominated the Power Enduro and Executive classes. American Hardware owner and host Joey Almeda took second in the Power Enduro while Darnel Francisco did the same in the Executive and Beginners Prod.

Celebrity drivers were led by MP Turbo's own racer turned rider for the day Mike Potenciano.

YACHTING CHAMP

Philippine Sports Commissioner Cynthia L. Carrion is shown with the Filipino crew of the Hong Kong yacht Hi-fidelity, overall winner of the racing class in the 15th Phuket King's Cup Regatta held in Thailand in celebration of the King's birthday recently.

JANUARY BASH

Int'l jr golfest at W'Wack

CANTADA

THE 5TH Philippine International Junior Golf Championships, the annual gathering of Asia's young top guns, returns to Wack Wack Golf and Country Club's East Course for the fourth straight year next month.

Philippine Junior Golf Federation president Edgardo "Boy" Cantada officially bared this yesterday. The federation conducts the annual event, which is one of the major events in the region.

The fifth edition of the tournament, which the federation launched in 1998 in Bacolod City, will be played Jan. 8-11. Six countries have already confirmed their participation.

"The early birds are Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong and South Korea," Cantada said. "We expect the other countries in the region to sign up before the registration deadline ends.

"At the same time, I would like to thank all our major supporters of this tournament such as Pagcor, Milo, Toyota Otis, Philippine Flour Mills, Bingo Bonanza, and Mitsubishi Motors."

Also supporting the tournament are sports patrons Gilberto "Bibit" Duavit, Taira Takonobu and well-known racerhorse owner Hermie Esguerra.

The Edsa Shangri-La is the tournament's official hotel while the Morelia Tours, courtesy of Tessie Oben, is the official transportation provider.

Free golf lessons

CALLAWAY'S staff of teaching professionals are offering free weekend lessons to junior players at the Power Golf driving range as part of the Callaway-ECI Christmas Treat promotion.

The free lessons are being conducted by noted teaching pros like Mario Slodina, Caloy Nival, Robin Santulis and Floro Nival every Saturday from 9-12 at designated stalls with balls provided for by Callaway through Electrobus Consolidated Inc.

JACKSONVILLE, Florida—The major championship that has haunted Greg Norman throughout his career is giving him another chance. He received a special invitation Tuesday from Augusta National Golf Club to play in next year's Masters.

"This is really a small effort by our teaching staff to let young people feel the spirit of the season with their expertise on the game of golf," said Baroma.

The instructions are being offered on a first-come, first-served basis with the first 18 students to sign up each session to be accommodated.

Also in the Callaway teaching staff are Joey Balot, Lito Casas, Teroy Nadales and Flor Aquino.

The free teaching lessons will be on offer for the whole month of December.

Arcilla bows in HK

JOHNNY Arcilla of the Philippines lost his first round match to Hong Kong's No. 1 John Hui, 0-6, 2-6 Tuesday night in the men's singles of the 2001 Asian Tennis Championships at the Victoria park Stadium in Hong Kong.

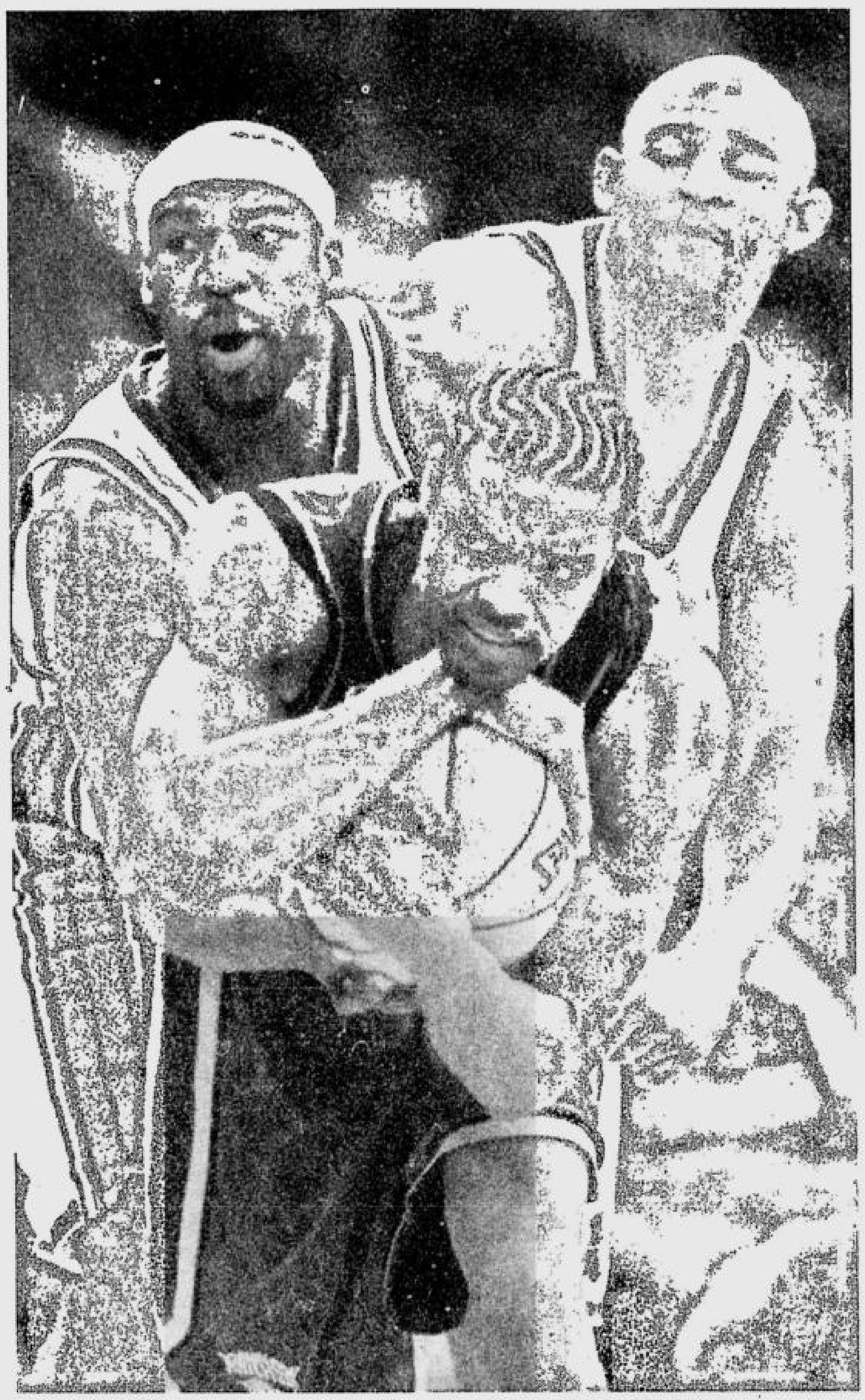
Despite the loss, Arcilla and Czarina Mae Arevalo remain in the competition as the two Filipinos will be playing in the mixed doubles and men and women doubles of the US$60,000 tournament offering wild cards in the Australian Open next year.

Arcilla and Arevalo will face second seeds Suwandi and Wynne Prakusya in the mixed doubles. Arcilla will team up with Malaysia's No. 1 Adam Jaya in the men's doubles where they will meet Iranian pair Anoosha Shahgholi and Akbar Taheri.

Arevalo and Malaysia's No. 1 Khoo Chin-Bee on the other hand will face Taiwanese tandem Hsieh Su-Wei and Chuang Chia-Jung in the women's doubles.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

TODAY in 1990, Sta. Lucia Realty beat Burger City, 94-83, to win its first ever PBL title at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum. Also today in 1992, Triple V defeated Sta. Lucia Realty, 78-68, to sweep the PBL Invitational Cup at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum.


NEW York Knicks' Latrell Sprewel (center) reacts as he is fouled by Charlotte Hornets players Baron Davis (left) and David Wesley (right) in the closing seconds of the Knicks' 100-95 win over the Charlotte Hornets at the Charlotte Coliseum, N.C., yesterday. Sprewell finished with 30 points. AP

Aguinaldo earns last NCRAA slot

EMILIO Aguinaldo College earned the fourth and final quarterfinal slot in Group B as the National Capital Region Athletic Association (NCRAA) yesterday upheld the Generals' protest against National College of Business and Arts.

NCRAA president Josefina Espino said the NCRAA board found out that NVBA's Robert Solon violated the league's one-year residency requirement upon evaluation of documents. With the league's decision, NCBA forfeited all of its games in the seniors basketball tournament.

Solon played for the University of the Philippines from 1996 to 1999 in the Universities Athletic Association of the Philippines and enrolled in only this year's second semester at NCBA. Solon's team beat EAC, 64-62, over the weekend and earned the berth via the winner-over-the-rule until all its wins were reversed by the league.

The Generals, which moved to the quarters with a 5-3 card, joined Lyceum (8-0), Polytechnic University of the Philippines (6-20 and DLSU-Manila (7-1) in the eight-team quarters.

Group's A St. Francis (8-0), Colegio de San Lorenzo (5-3), Philippine Maritime Institute (6-2) and La Salle Dasmariñas (4-4) also booked berths in this tournament supported by Pagcor, Mikasa, Pepsi, Splash and the Department of Agrarian Reform.

Making it to the women's quarterfinals in Group A are PUP (3-0), La Salle-Manila (2-1), Philippine Maritime Institute (1-2) and St. Benedict (0-3). Qualifiers in Group B are Lyceum (3-0), DLSU-D (2-1), CDSL (1-2) and AMACC (0-3). Junior qualifiers are SFACS, Olivarez College, CDSL and New Era.

Jazz melt Heat

MIAMI —A surprisingly bad season took an embarrassing turn for the worse Tuesday night as the Miami Heat were held to the fourth-lowest point total in NBA history, losing 95-56 to the Utah Jazz for their 18th loss in 23 games.

Miami tied the franchise record for fewest points in a game, and their fans let them know about with a chorus of boos throughout. Miami also scored 56 points against Charlotte on Dec. 20, 2000.

Karl Malone and Danyell Marshall each scored 21 points for Utah, which set a team record for fewest points allowed. Eddie Jones led the Heat with 12 points, but was the team's only player to reach double figures.

NBARESULTS

Cleveland 102, Chicago 84; New York 100, Charlotte 95; Utah 95, Miami 56; Indiana 103, Atlanta 100; Milwaukee 114, Memphis 105; Dallas 107, Minnesota 103; L.A. Clippers 96, Phoenix 92; Portland 101, Houston 92; San Antonio 102, Denver 93; Sacramento 102, Detroit 98. AP

'Give Cebu a chance'

"IT'S about time we gave Cebu a chance."

Cebu City Sports Commission chair Jonathan Guardo yesterday said he was confident Cebu would win the bid to host the 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

The Cebu City government, headed by Mayor Tommy Osmeña, has expressed full support to Guardo's plans. He created the 2005 SEA Games bidding committee chaired by Guardo and former representative Joy Young.

Guardo said the Queen City of the South could easily hold 10 to 15 sports events for the biennial conclave four years from now. Other cities in the province like Lapu Lapu, Danao, Mandaue and Mactan have also agreed to Guardo's concept of a multi-city bidding.

Guardo said he is eyeing the 22-hectare area at the South Reclamation area or a huge property in Lapu Lapu City for the venue.

Now that the Philippine Olympic Committee has finalized the guidelines for the bidding, Guardo said he would submit Cebu's letter of intent anytime this week.

"I've been to Johore Baru, Malaysia during the recent SEA Games and comparatively, Cebu has better facilities and can easily host some big events like athletics, boxing, weightlifting and even gymnastics," said Guardo.

Guardo, who's also the CEO of Osaka Iridology, said Cebu's hosting of the 2005 Southeast Asian Games will be even more beneficial to the country's tourism industry.

Cebu has been tagged as one of Asia's top tourist destinations with its numerous beautiful scenic spots, five-star hotels and an international airport in Mactan, which accommodates regular flights to key Asian cities.

"Accessibility-wise, Cebu has the edge over the other bidders. Cebu's world-class tourist spots will gain the needed exposure to help boost the country's tourism industry," he said.

Survey picks Jordan No. 1

NEW YORK—Michael Jordan and Mia Hamm are at the top of the list for US sports marketers.

A survey released Tuesday asked public relations and marketing executives to select which male and female athlete would be the ideal representative if they were launching a new product or service in 2002.

Jordan received 17 percent of the vote, edging Tiger Woods (16 percent) and Derek Jeter (13 percent).

Hamm, soccer's 2001 women's world player of the year, received 22 percent of the vote, beating Anna Kournikova (17 percent) and Venus Williams (11 percent).

The survey was conducted by Alan Taylor Communications. AP

NFL confronts rowdy fans anew

NEW ORLEANS—The NFL is taking a hard stand against fan violence after a second ugly display marred a game.

One day after a game in Cleveland was interrupted when fans threw objects, including partially filled plastic beer bottles, onto the field, the same thing happened in New Orleans. Both times, the fans were unhappy with officials' calls.

"We are not going to tolerate objects being thrown from the stands," NFL spokesman Greg Aiello said. "We will work with our clubs to review all aspects of these incidents and take whatever steps are necessary to prevent them from happening again."

Lakers' Bryant sued for non-payment of debts

BRYANT

LOS ANGELES—Lakers star Kobe Bryant has been sued by an engineering company that claims he owes 362,156 for helping remodel his Pacific Palisades property.

The suit was filed [illegible] in Superior Court and made public Tuesday. It claims that Bryant hired Calex Engineering to excavate, grade and perform other work at the site. The company "fully performed its contract obligations" but is still owed money, according to the suit.

Two similar lawsuits were filed against Bryant by other companies in September and October.

Bryant's lawyer said the allegations are without merit and will be fought.

The contractors "filed claims far in excess of the value of the work performed," attorney Rick August said.

"Whether it's because of Mr. Bryant's celebrity or otherwise," the contractors have tried to collect "far more than they're entitled to," August said.

Other contractors have been paid, he said.

"Mr. Bryant has and will continue to pay all legitimate claims for work done on his property," he said. AP

Balloting: Carter beats Shaq

NEW YORK —Toronto's Vince Carter leads fan balloting for the NBA All-Star game with 471,255 votes, well ahead of Western Conference leader Shaquille O'Neal.

The Los Angeles Lakers' O'Neal has 408,406.

Carter also led the voting the past two seasons. The other top Eastern Conference forward in the voting, released Tuesday, was Grant Hill of Orlando with 175,356.

Leading at guard in the East were Philadelphia's Allen Iverson (284,368) and Washington's Michael Jordan (271,598). Dikembe Mutombo of Philadelphia (193,537) was the top center in the balloting.

Western Conference leaders were Minnesota's Kevin Garnett, with 294,632 votes, and San Antonio's Tim Duncan (203,929) at forward, and the Lakers' Kobe Bryant (147,186) and Houston's Steve Francis (147,186) at guard.

Voting ends Jan. 13. AP

Basco, Narvaez Manzano Memorial Cup winners

MICHAEL Basco and Miguel Narvaez hammered out pulsating upset victories Monday to barge into the boys' 16 years and under semifinals of the Armando Manzano Memorial age-group tennis championships at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

Basco, seeded only sixth, bundled out top seed Irwin de Guzman, 6-4, 6-2, to arrange a Last 4 date with seventh Boris John Chavez, who ousted Arithmetico Lim, 7-6, 6-4.

On the other hand, the unseeded Narvaez, who had ousted third seed Nestor Celestino in the first round, added fifth seed Hamza Macapendeg to his hit list via a 6-1, 6-1 thrashing.

Narvaez now goes up against second pick Jendrick de Castro in the semifinals on Friday. De Castro won over eight seed Ed Angelo Diez, 6-4, 6-2.

Also advancing in this event organized by the Philippine Tennis Association (Philta) to honor the late Armando Manzano, the first Filipino ITF while badge umpire, were boys' 18 years and under top seed Ian de Guzman, third seed Christian Cuarto and fourth pick Patrick John Tierro.

Sta. Lucia redefines patience

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

IT was Edmund Burke who said, "Our patience will achieve more than our force."

Never was Sta. Lucia Realty known for force. In its almost nine years of residence in the PBA, the Realtors were not noted to unleash force on enemy lines. They never roared like lions. They were usually herded like sheep. Mules they were—virtually.

Sta. Lucia ended all that nasty profile on Sunday.

Or, to be exact, Sta. Lucia discarded its cloak of meekness and unfurled a ferocity that occurs only once in a decade in the fabled league. It did so via a 75-72 victory over San Miguel Beer to clinch its first PBA crown—the Governors Cup—in the title playoffs (4-2).

"We have literally forgotten the meaning of victory," said Buddy Encarnado, Sta. Lucia's enduring team manager. "When we won, we were at a loss for words. We did not know how to react. It was simply unbelievable. We even forgot that we had to join the boys during the celebration at the hard court, pose before photographers."

Buddy was Sta. Lucia's team manager when the squad joined the PBA in 1993. He still is. The team has had changes of coaches. But never was Buddy's position threatened. Excy Robles, the quiet Sta. Lucia owner, stuck to him through thick and thin.

Excy Robles, Teng Santos' favorite in-law, personifies Sta. Lucia's character. A very unassuming guy, Excy had a funny experience when he went to see a PBA game in the '90s. A PBA usher, not recognizing who Excy was, barred him from entering the Cuneta Astrodome. He was shooed away, treated like a bum trying to gatecrash his way into a private party. Excy never raised a fuss. He took it in stride and strode home quietly.

"That's our boss," said Buddy of Excy. "You'll never hear him complain."

Patience has always been Sta. Lucia's strength.

Patience was also the weapon of the revered Mahatma Ghandi to change the course of history for India. China's founder, Mao Zedong, had a radical description of it: Revolution is not a picnic.

SPORTSWATCH

Fun Foundation tilt

THE 1ST Power of Fun Foundation Golf Tournament will be staged at the Malarayat Golf & Country Club on the 11th of January 2002. Registration will open at 6 a.m. and tee-off time will be between 6:30 to 9:30 a.m. Organized by a group belonging to the Makati Chapter of the Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen and Professionals (BCBP), the tournament aims to raise funds for the Foundation to be able to assist outreach program and other evangelization projects.

'Home' of kickboxing

THE MANILA Midtown Hotel (MMH) is the official hotel of Big Challenge 2, an open Asian Amateur Kickboxing and Muay Thai Championship for men and women. It will be organized by the International Amateur Muay Thai Federation-Philippines (IAMTF-Phil) and International Kickboxing Federation (IKBF) with headquarters in Grevenbroich, Germany. Venue is the Robinson's Place, Manila on April 12-14, 2002. Some 20 countries from Asia, Europe, USA, Australia, and Canada with more than 150 athletes are expected to participate.

SPORTS ON TV

COMPILED BY LORENZO MANGUIAT

POOL: World Pool League 2001 at 12 noon (r –8:30 p.m.) on ESPN
BASKETBALL: US NCAA Jimmy V Classic – Duke vs Kentucky at 1 p.m. on ESPN
NBA - Toronto Raptors vs Indiana Pacers at 10 p.m. on NBN 4
GOLF: PGA Compaq Classic, Final Round at 2 p.m. on Star Sports
TENNIS: Best of US Open 2001 at 9:30 p.m. on Star Sports

SPORTS

AL S. MENDOZA, Editor ▨ EDWIN M. VILLANUEVA, Assistant Editor

Lally scores hole-in-one

FORMER Congresswoman Lally Laurel-Trinidad scored her first hole-in-one in the recently concluded Philippine Navy/Apolinario Cup, the Phil. Navy Golf Club's year-end tournament. She accomplished the feat in the par 3 hole no. 12, using a Callaway 6 iron and a Pinnacle Golf ball. Her flight included Ramy Diez and Roland Kapunan.

Hill out for rest of season

ORLANDO, Florida—NBA All-Star Grant Hill will miss the rest of the season after undergoing a third operation on his left ankle. The Orlando Magic forward played in 14 games this season after missing all but four games last year. He signed a seven-year, $93 million contract with Orlando in August 2000. "I'm disappointed for the fans and my teammates," Hill said in a statement Tuesday. "Hopefully, this will lead me down the road to recovery. I will continue to remain optimistic as I face this latest challenge." *AP*

CHAMPS ON THE ROAD

Blades capture MBA crown

▨ PSA votes Ildefonso A16
▨ Int'l golfest at W'Wack A17

By Roy Luarca

BACOLOD CITY—The Blades were simply sharper than the Slashers last night.

Riding the momentum of a strong start, the LBC Batangas Blades beat the Negros Slashers, 94-75, to clinch the MBA national title at the packed University of St. La Salle Gym here.

Powered by Tonyboy Espinosa, Romel Adducul and Alex Compton, the Blades took a 50-28 halftime spread which they used to cushion the impact of the Slashers' repeated comeback attempts.

The Blades thus captured their first national championship, cutting short the best-of-five series in Game Four, 3-1, and derailing the Slashers for the third time in as many attempts.

The most the Slashers could do was trim the gap, 67-58, at the start of the fourth quarter, before the Blades finished them off with a 10-2 blast anchored on Adducul, Espinosa and Chuchu Serrano.

With Espinosa pouring in 17 points, Compton dishing off the assists and Adducul striking from inside, the Blades pulled away by as many as 24 points, 47-23, to silence the Negrense crowd.

With their victory, the Blades earned the distinction of being the only MBA team to emerge champions on the road.

While admitting that it would have been more festive if they had won in Lipa City, Racela said he'd take the championship any time.

"A championship no matter where is always sweet," said Racela. "We're lucky that we were able to silence the Negros crowd."

MBA commissioner Butch Antonio awarded the trophy to Blades co-owners Santi and Dino Araneta during the brief awarding rites.

"The boys had the heart for it (championship). I'm proud of them," said Santi Araneta, also the Multi-Regional Board Inc. chair, at the champagne-soaked and tobacco smoke-filled dugout.

Compton and Espinosa shared best player honors after scoring 21 points each. Compton, however, wound up with seven assists, two steals and one rebound as against Espinosa's three rebounds, four assists and one steal.

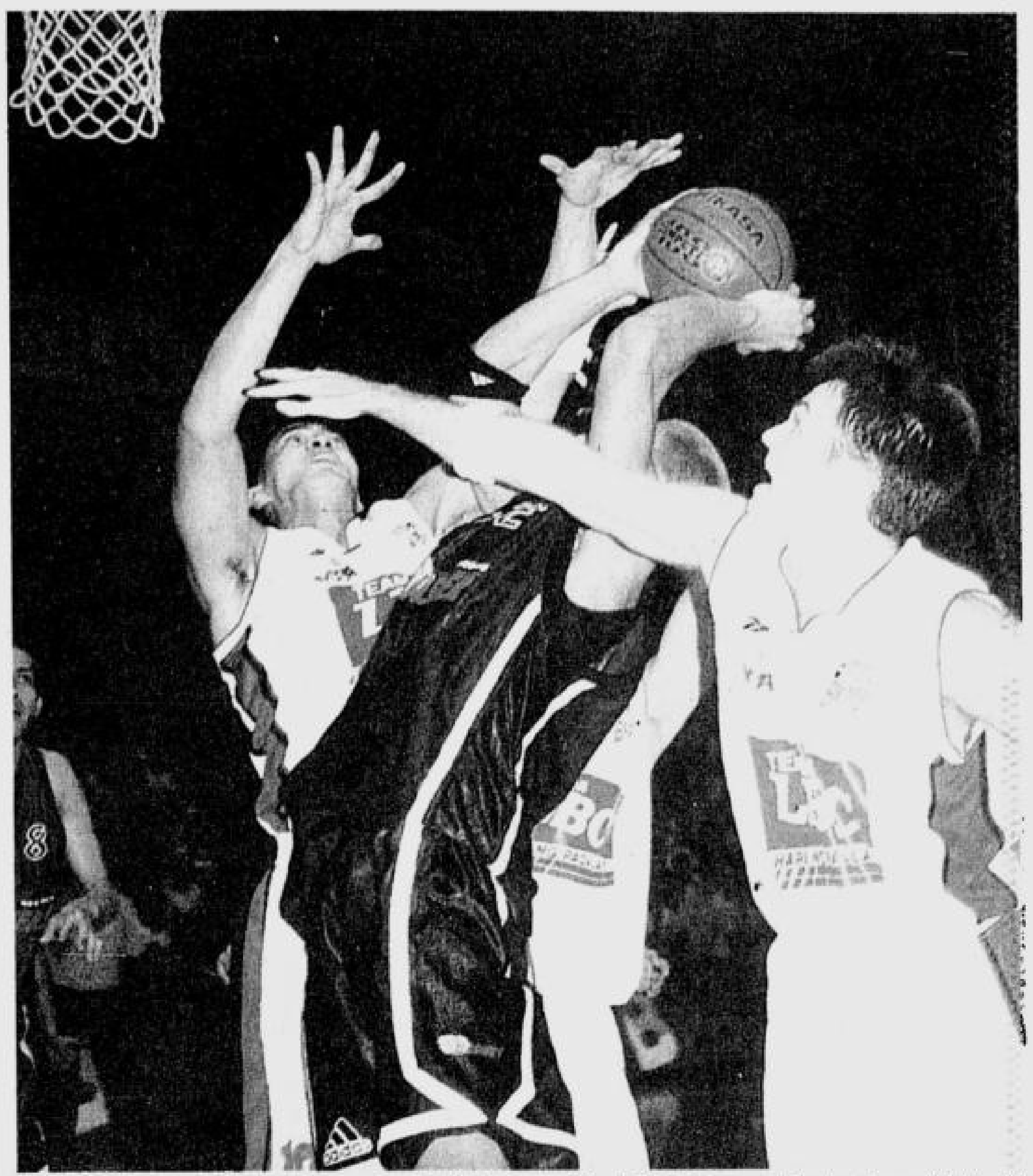
The Slashers, who felt the absence of power leaper Leo Bat-og, drew 20 points from John Ferriols, but their inability to rule the boards and connect from the outside affected their game.

Scores:

LBC BATANGAS 94—Adducul 21, Compton 21, Espinosa 21, Laure 10, Rivera 9, Sanders 5, Serrano 5, Corbin 2, Martin 0, Ramirez 0.

NEGROS 75—Ferriols 20, Madrid 17, Hugnatan 12, Tierra 7, Aldeguer 5, Cardel 4, White 4, Dela Rosa 2, Ignacio 0, Huelar 0.

Quarters: 26-17, 50-28, 67-55, 94-75.



NEGROS Slashers Reynel Hugnatan is triple-teamed by LBC Batangas Blades Romel Adducul, Alex Compton and Peter Martin during their Game 3 at the La Salle Centrum in Lipa City. The Blades won, 87-84. Batangas beat Negros anew last night, 94-75, to win the MBA title.

WAZZZZUP?
ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE
Cowboy Grill — HIMIG KNIGHTS — NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎801.7644
Cowboy Grill — GIFTED MIND STREETLIFE/MIX-UP — NO ENTRANCE FEE 525.1474/525.4269
Cowboy Grill — KOOL JACKS FAT 16 — NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎521.8143
Cowboy Grill, NOVALICHES Q.C. — POWER SURGE PURE INSTINCT/FEEDBACK — NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎936.9757
MUSIC WAREHOUSE — BLAKDYAK RIDGE — X O P 735.1405/735.1280
TIA MARIA'S JUPITER ST., MAKATI CITY — PLAYGROUND SOUNDSTREAM — RETROSPECT DEC.27 ☎890.4735
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La Salle tests Shark today

FRONTRUNNING ICTSI-La Salle tries to firm up its hold of solo leadership when it battles defending champion Shark Energy Drink today in the PBL Challenge Cup at the Makati Coliseum.

The ICTSI-Archers (7-2) are fresh from a morale-boosting 91-73 triumph over Ateneo-Pioneer and will be gunning for their third straight triumph in the 3:30 p.m. match.

But the Power Boosters, coming from two consecutive setbacks, will likely vent their ire on the rivals whom they beat, 64-58, in their first round encounter last Dec. 4.

"We're expecting that," said ICTSI-La Salle head coach Franz Pumaren. "It's hard to stay on top and obviously, the three other teams behind us—Shark, Welcoat and Blu Detergent—are still in the thick of the fight for the top two automatic semifinals slot and they will be our opponents in the coming games."

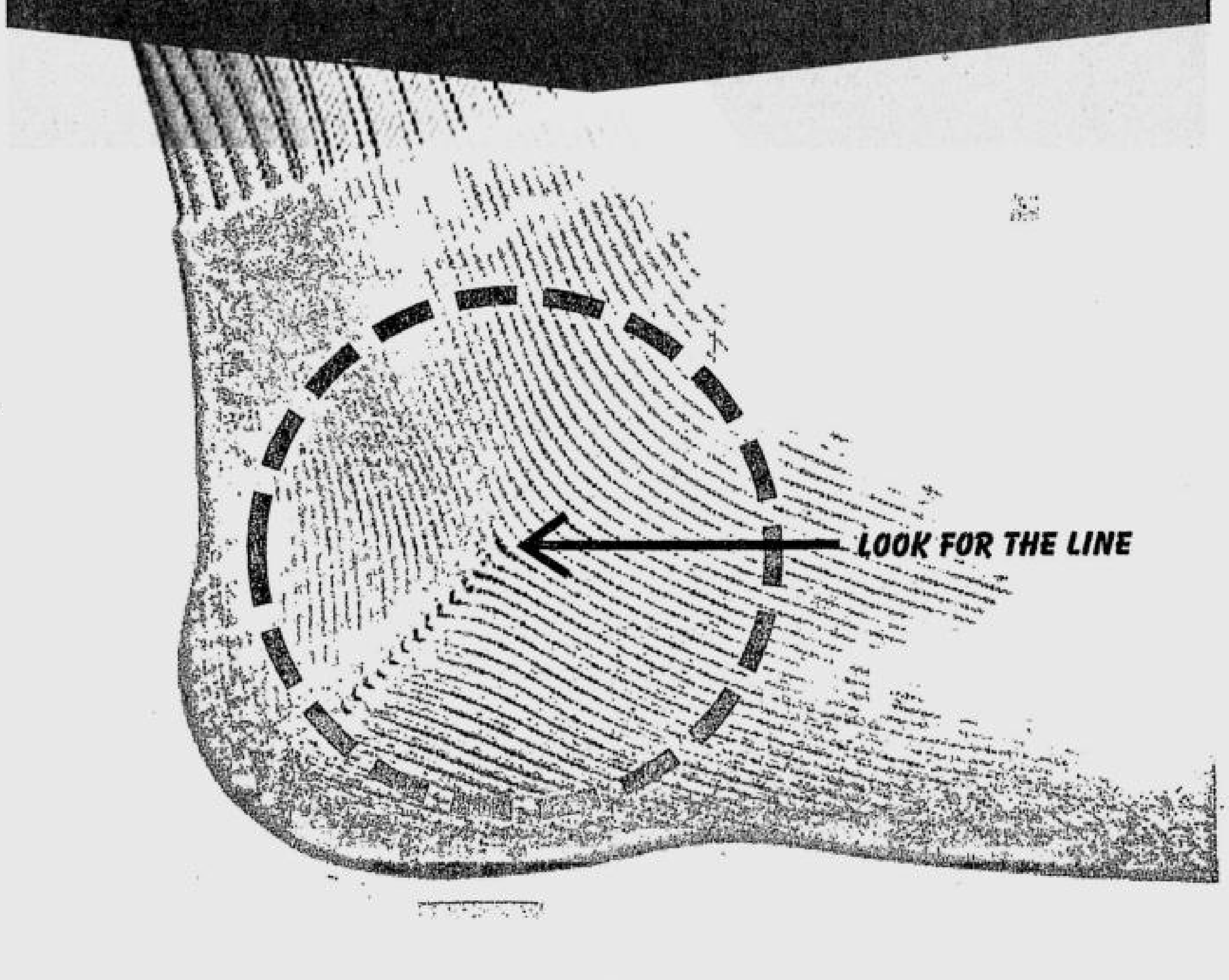
One big problem for ICTSI-La Salle is how to stop Chester Tolomia who came up with 28 points aside from eight rebounds and two blocks in their first round encounter.

In the other game, Blu Detergent also tries to bounce back from a sorry loss when it collides with Montana Pawnshop at 5:30 p.m.

Standings	W	L
ICTSI-La Salle	7	2
Shark	6	4
Blu	6	4
Welcoat	6	4
Ateneo	4	6
Kutitap	4	6
Ana	4	6
Montana	3	8

GAMES TODAY
3:30 p.m.—ICTSI-La Salle vs Shark
5:30 p.m.—Montana vs Blu Detergent

TRUE TO YOUR HEELS!



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METRO

LOUIE C. CAMINO, Editor

Christmas tree against crimes

A CHRISTMAS tree decorated with photographs of victims of heinous crimes will be unveiled tomorrow by members of an anti-crime group to symbolize their hope for justice. Members of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption will sponsor a Mass for victims of heinous crimes at 10 a.m. tomorrow at the Sta. Maria Goretti parish church on United Nations Avenue, Manila.

CHRISTMAS/ A20

ALL IS BRIGHT

All the glow and glitter of Christmas lights cannot assuage hunger, but this poor couple, vending green mango and 'bagoong' on the sidewalk, appear momentarily mesmerized by the holiday brightness around them. JOAN BONDOC

NBI expanding Nida slay probe

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation is widening the scope of its investigation of the Nida Blanca murder to include the victim's other acquaintances, particularly those in show business, after agents discovered that the actress was seen at the Atlanta Centre building lobby just before she disappeared.

NBI authorities also said they are determined to put Rod Strunk, Nida Blanca's husband, through the lie-detector test, even if Strunk's lawyers advised their client against it.

"We respect the right of Mr. Strunk not to undergo the test," said NBI spokesperson Ricardo Diaz. "(But) we would like to talk to them (to persuade Strunk) to reconsider his decision and undergo the polygraph test at a later time."

Strunk's lawyers at the Siguion Reina Law Office advised him not to take the lie test because the result will be inadmissible in court. They also said Strunk runs the risk of being prejudged as guilty.

But Diaz said the polygraph test is important, since it will determine if a witness or suspect is telling the truth. He added the exam's result could be admitted in court if both sides agree.

"People are also saying that if it's not that important, why does (Strunk) refuse to take it?" Diaz said.

Wycoco earlier said the bureau would begin to suspect something is wrong, if Strunk does not cooperate in the investigation.

Strunk did not attend his scheduled polygraph test yesterday. His lawyer Denis Manalo told reporters that his client was depressed at reports coming out in media.

He said Strunk will still cooperate with the NBI, but at a later time when the fuss over Strunk dies down.

And, as if on cue, Diaz said yesterday that the investigation is now "going to the next level."

"We are going to broaden the investigation and interview those close to her (Blanca), outside her immediate family, who may know something that might help the investigation," Diaz said.

"This will necessarily touch many of her show biz friends," added Diaz, who refused to name names.

He said a security guard from the Atlanta Centre building on Annapolis Street in San Juan told investigators that he saw Blanca at the lobby before she disappeared.

"This means somebody close to her must have picked her up," Diaz said.

He also appealed to Blanca's friends to cooperate, adding that receiving an invitation from the bureau does not necessarily mean they are considered suspects.

"I request those who have information about Ms Blanca's death to please come out and make themselves available to us," he said.

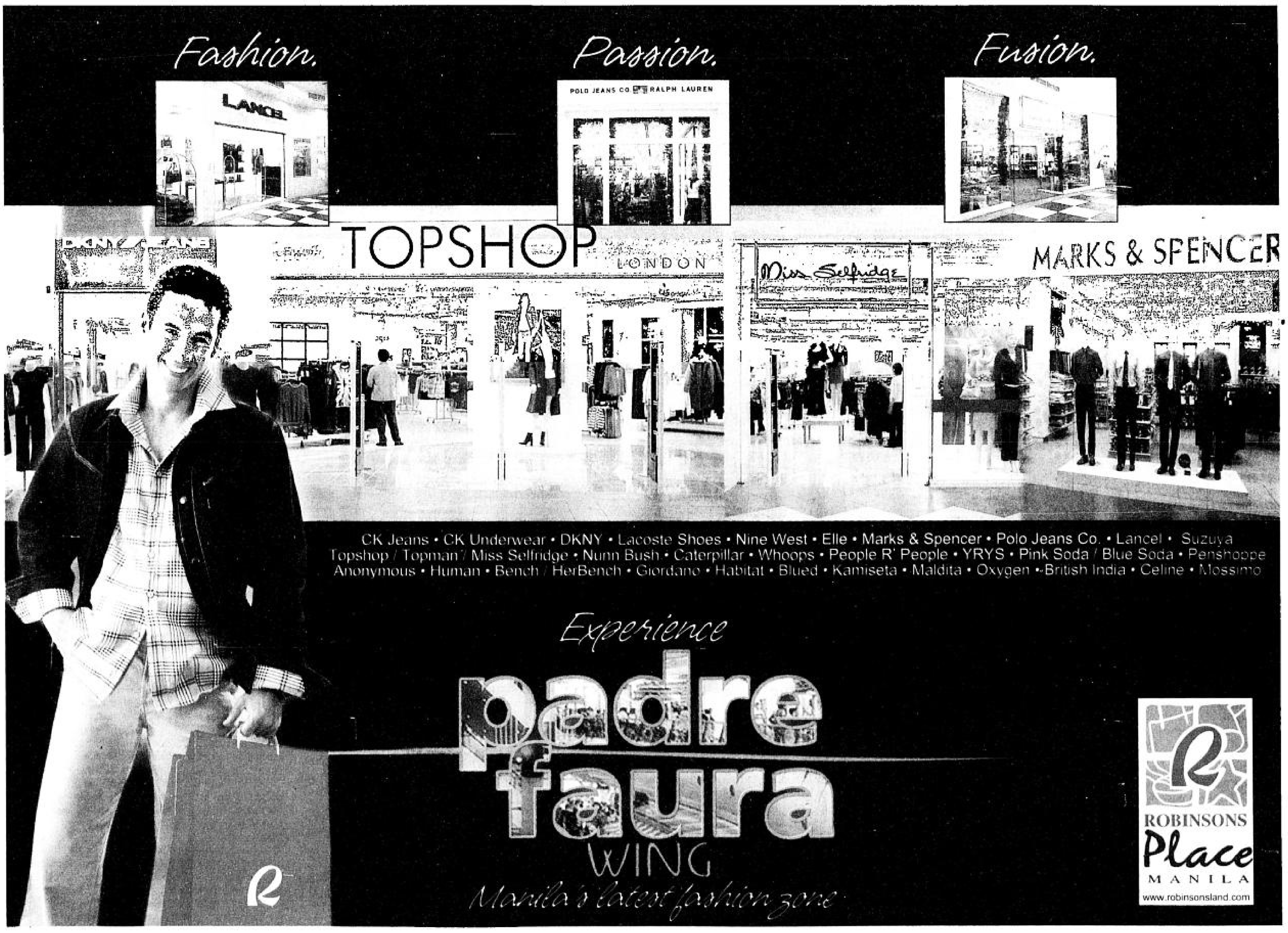
Diaz also denied the insinuations of Strunk's lawyers that the investigation is in danger of going the way of the botched investigation of Task Force Marsha.

"That is not true," Diaz said. "Perhaps there is some sort of misunderstanding between us. That can be remedied."

"We want the case solved because our careers are on the line," Diaz added.

He pointed out that the bureau called for a press conference only once—when the results of Philip Medel's medical and psychological exams were released.

"The people are looking for answers, and we do not want the press to get their information from other (unreliable) sources," Diaz said, adding that the NBI has not released information that can hamper the investigation.



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3 behind 'gold bar' slay fall

By Philip C. Tubeza

THREE kidnapping suspects believed behind the abduction and murder of a businessman they had enticed into a bogus gold bar business have been arrested, the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) announced yesterday.

NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco identified the suspects as businessman Ronald S. Orpillo, 31; Eduardo D. Quibuan, 30; and widower Nelson B. Hidalgo, 35, all natives of Cagayan province.

They were allegedly responsible for the disappearance of Eriberto D. Garcia, 57, of Lower Bicutan, Taguig, Metro Manila in Cubao, Quezon City in September.

Garcia's body has yet to be found. The suspects allegedly dumped it in a river somewhere in La Union.

Lawyer Oscar L. Embido, head of the NBI Intelligence Special Operations Division (Isod), said the victim was abducted on Sept. 26 at the Farmer's Market in Cubao.

Garcia allegedly met with the suspects that day after they enticed him to invest in their bogus business involving gold bars.

But a witness told the NBI that he saw the victim with a certain Randy and two unidentified men board the victim's maroon Honda Civic (with plate number WCY-364).

"Garcia did not return and this prompted his wife to report the matter to the NBI," Wycoco said.

He said the bureau got a break in the case when the police recovered the victim's car in Cagayan. Eight men, including the three suspects, used the Honda Civic in a bungled robbery try at a bank in Aparri, Cagayan.

NBI agents, together with the witness, immediately went to Cagayan to confront the suspects.

Wycoco said the witness positively identified Orpillo, Quibuan, and Hidalgo as the last persons seen with the victim.

And during their interrogation, the suspects allegedly admitted to the crime.

They allegedly confessed to taking Garcia's car after they strangled him to death while they were on their way to La Union.

"Our efforts to recover the body yielded negative results," Wycoco said.

He added that the suspects were charged with murder, kidnapping, car theft, and serious illegal detention at the Department of Justice.

An appeal to the super-rich Gokongweis

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

A LOT of people were surprised at Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson's use of the word "taratitat" to describe presidential spokesperson Rigoberto "Bobi" Tiglao.

Taratitat describes a woman of loose morals, or a person who is promiscuous. But the word is not spoken in decent, everyday conversation among "normal" people. The word is used by an esoteric group of men— rather half-men, half-women—who fling their wrists to stress a point, swing their hips when they walk, and mimic real women when they talk.

Yes, *taratitat* is only used by "swards" or homosexual fairies. It's unbecoming of a senator or a man who projects himself as macho to have such a word in his vocabulary.

***

One of those who expressed surprise at Lacson's use of the word was Pinoy Times columnist Jose F. Lacaba.

Joe Lacaba said it's understandable for President Macapagal-Arroyo to say, "Why do you make *patol* these people?" when she could have said, "Why do you dignify these people?" to get back at her critics.

GMA, according to Lacaba, was just reverting to the *colegiala* language that she and her peers spoke when they were students at the Assumption Convent.

***

But why should Lacson use "swardspeak" or gay language when he is a macho former cop? Joe Lacaba said.

"Ang masasabi ko lang, kahit 'hindi swardspeak ang taratitat ay una ko siyang narinig sa mga kakilala kong bading, at hindi ko inaasahang gagamitin ito ng isang pulis na macho na tulad ni Senador Ping (Even if the word taratitat were not swardspeak, I first heard it from my gay acquaintances, and I didn't expect a former macho cop like Senator Ping to use it" the noted columnist said.

Bakit, Joe, *anong akala mo ba kay* Pinky?

***

The dismissal of the impeachment complaint against Ombudsman Aniano Desierto Tuesday was expected. The 58-member House committee on justice voted 35-5 to dismiss it.

It's surprising why the complaint, filed by a lawyer whom many of his *companeros* consider weird, was entertained at all.

First, the lawyer, Ernesto Francisco, filed it supposedly in behalf of his former client, Luke Roxas who refused to testify for him. Francisco said he was witness to an alleged bribery made by Roxas on Desierto.

***

But if you examine Francisco's allegations closely, his only evidence is that tape of his conversations with his former client who said that he was able to haggle for a smaller amount.

Nowhere in the taped conversation was it mentioned that the money was personally handed over to Desierto.

The greatest mistake Francisco made was to violate the lawyer-client relationship by divulging a confidential information about his client. *Talagang may tama itong si Francisco!*

***

In this season of giving, it's surprising why the super-rich Gokongweis are so *barat* or miserly as to refuse to compensate a worker who lost both his legs in an accident recently inside a factory owned by the super-rich family.

Nineteen-year-old Remarth Bagtas of Kalinisan St., Batasan Hills, Quezon City, was doing a painting job inside a tank at the Robina Corp. compound in Pasig City. The tank exploded. Bagtas suffered third degree burns. Both his legs had to be amputated.

Bagtas' hospital bills at the government-owned Rizal Medical Center amounted to P68,000. He was only released by the hospital after the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) shouldered his hospital bills—upon the representation of "Isumbong Mo Kay Tulfo" radio-TV program. My kindhearted *Chinoy* friends like Willie So and Johnny Chua donated money for Bagtas' medicines.

***

The Gokongweis never gave Bagtas a single centavo for his medicines and hospitalization.

You know what they gave? Robina Corp. products like biscuits, noodles and junk food cheese curls! *At kokonti pa.*

Bagtas is now back in his home. He's happy that some people (my friends, actually) bought him a wheelchair. But he has no hard feelings toward the Gokongweis.

"*Hindi naman nila ako empleyado kasi, e*," he said.

***

Yes, Bagtas was not hired directly by the Robina Corp. management. He was working for a company contracted by Robina Corp. to do a painting job inside the tank.

In short, there's no employer-employee relationship between Bagtas and Robina Corp. Technically, the firm that hired Bagtas should have shouldered his hospitalization and medicines. *Pero balasubas din ito.*

But, *por Dios, por santo naman*, why don't the Gokongweis consider the humanitarian aspect of the whole thing! *Tao rin po naman si* Remarth Bagtas.

The amount that PSCO paid to bail Bagtas out of the hospital is just a drop in the ocean considering the millions of pesos that the family earns in one day.

If the Gokongweis could splurge on a party where John Sr. announced his retirement from his group of companies that include Cebu Pacific Airways, Galleria Suites, Robinson's shopping centers, why can't they extend a little help to a poor man who met an accident while working for them?

Please, my dear Gokongweis, help Bagtas! Even if the guy doesn't mean anything to you, just consider the spirit of Christmas.

Christmas tree . . .

(From page A19)

VACC members led by their chair and president, Dante Jimenez, will unveil the Christmas tree that will be decorated with pictures of victims of heinous crimes, including those pending at courts or still unsolved by the police.

'The most fervent wish of families of crime victims is the gift of justice for their loved ones this Christmas, to see the light beyond the glimmer of the traditional Christmas tree," said Janette Gonzaga, VACC officer-in-charge.

Among the photos are those of the victims of the Novaliches massacre, the Polendey, Bedana and Mutuc massacre, of the Paco orphanage and Ozone disco fire tragedies, of Mark Chua, Jake Lopez, Gian Carlo Leung and slain kidnap-for-ransom victims.

The group bitterly criticized the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, whom it supported during the Edsa People Power II, after the Chief Executive showed alleged indecisiveness on the imposition of death penalty for heinous crimes.

Jerome Aning

JOAN BONDOC

WHO CARES?

What the caring eyes of an innocent child can see, adults in this busy, run-run commercial world cannot be expected to behold. Like the pitiful sight of this plodder in a wheelchair keeping up and holing his own in the middle of busy EDSA-Taft intersection.

2 HK drug dealers fall

By Agnes E. Donato and TJ Burgonio

POLICE arrested two Hong Kong nationals and two Filipinos in a buy-bust and seized 90 bricks of marijuana, each weighing a kilo, in Malabon City before dawn yesterday.

Police arrested Luk Wai, 30, and Cheung Saiwah, 36, both staying at the Bayview Hotel; Danilo Regala, 23, of Sucat, Parañaque City, and Danilo King, 48, of Makati City.

The seized marijuana bricks have a street value of P225,000, at P2,500 per kilo, police said.

Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, Northern Police District director, said police are still investigating the foreigners and their probable connection with drug syndicates abroad.

He pointed out that marijuana is not a favorite substance of abuse in the country, but is still popular abroad because it is organic.

"We believe the marijuana we seized was only part of a bigger bulk which the suspects were planning to ship out, but were not able to," Querol said. "The suspects must have been trying to find a way to dispose of this before the raid."

Malabon police chief Supt. Ernesto Fojas Jr. said the suspects decided to trade the marijuana here after they encountered shipment problems.

But the Chinese suspects denied having anything to do with the drugs. They said police picked them up at gunpoint inside the Miss Universe nightclub in Pasay City at 10 p.m. Tuesday.

They complained they were not provided lawyers and were not allowed to call the Chinese embassy.

"Please call the embassy for us," Luk told reporters yesterday.

Luk also claimed he arrived from Hong Kong only on Tuesday.

Fojas said the local Narcotics Group placed the suspects under surveillance three weeks ago.

According to police, drug enforcers under Insp. Noel Lasquite arrested the four in an entrapment about 1 a.m. yesterday at a gasoline station on Gov. Pascual Avenue, Barangay Baritan, Malabon.

A policeman posed as a buyer and allegedly negotiated with the suspects, who arrived on board a white Tamaraw FX (WEZ 406). When Luk handed over 10 bricks of marijuana to the undercover lawman in exchange for P23,000 in bogus money, police immediately arrested the suspects and seized the rest of the illegal stash concealed in the vehicle.

The four suspects will be charged for violating RA 6425, or the Anti-Dangerous Drugs Act Law.

Rice and cash for trash

By Alcuin Papa

IT'S not magic, but this Christmas, garbage could be turned into rice and cash.

Metro Manila Development Authority chair Benjamin Abalos yesterday said they have launched a program to give Metro Manila residents the opportunity to exchange recyclable garbage such as old newspapers, plastic bottles, metals and glass products for rice or cash.

The program, dubbed "Recyclables Palit Bigas," aims to encourage Metro Manila residents to segregate their garbage.

Under the program, sorted and cleaned recyclable garbage can be exchanged for rice or cash with the MMDA's "tinda-vans" that the agency is set to deploy in strategic points.

Abalos stressed that the recyclable materials should be cleaned, dried and must have no trace of biodegradable waste.

Meanwhile, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)is again pushing recycling and segregation as the main thrusts in solving the ever-worsening garbage problem in Metro Manila.

In an interview concerning the latest World Bank Report on the garbage dilemma, Environment Secretary Heherson Alvarez reiterated the DENR's focus toward the two methods of solid waste management, adding that the former could be turned into a major money-making industry.

"With the help of our local governments and businessmen, we could make recycling hugely beneficial to both the economy and the environment. Barangays could augment their income by closing deals with the processing plants," said Alvarez.

The World Bank Report showed that Metro Manila trash is, in fact, highly recyclable and that the only 9 percent of its possesses no commercial value at all. About 49 percent of solid waste like paper, plastic and metal can be recycled into new products while the remaining 42 percent can be made into organic fertilizer.

Unofficial estimates pegged the gross earnings last year from the sale of recovered materials from garbage at P132.5 million. This figure represents the measly 13 percent of the total Metro Manila garbage that were recycled last year.

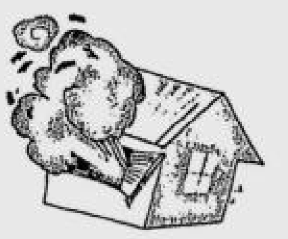
METROBRIEFS

Robbery

SECURITY guard Glen Desierto, 25, took a bullet in the right leg after he was shot by three armed men during a robbery on Tuesday at the Bank of Philippine Islands branch on Ninoy Aquino Avenue in Barangay Sto. Nino, Parañaque, police said. The robbers escaped with P1,500 cash and jewelry worth about P100,000 they had taken from bank manager Imelda Garcia, 40, after she warned them that opening the bank's vault would trigger the bank's alarm system, said a janitor of the bank.

Christian V. Esguerra

Blast



STA. MARIA, Bulacan—-JC Pabayos, 21, died, while his companion Roberto Fababier, 24, was injured when a makeshift firecracker factory in Barangay Pulong Buhangin here exploded on Tuesday night, police said. Pabayos and Fababier were rushing the production of sparklers when one of them accidentally dropped a mixture of chemicals, which spread unto a pile of inflammable materials and triggered an explosion, police said. Licensed manufacturer Lita Fababier owned the factory.

Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Rampage

AN UNIDENTIFIED man believed to be a drug addict went on a rampage on Quingua Street in Barangay Pinagkaisahan, Makati City on Tuesday day and stabbed dead Marine Corporal Jonathan Amaro, 29, who was assigned at Ft. Bonifacio in Taguig, police said. But Chief Insp. Abraham Abella of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology happened to be in the area and shot dead the suspect after he also tried to stab the jail official, police said.

Alcuin Papa

Shot dead

BILLIARD center and restaurant owner Gerry Esguerra allegedly shot dead pedicab driver Carlito Muello, 28, yesterday in Las Piñas City, police said. Muello died from three gunshot wounds, said SPO1 George Gabriel. Prior to the killing, Esguerra and Muello were in a fist fight over a long-running feud. A village watcher tried to break up the fight, but couldn't, after Esguerra allegedly poked a gun at him and Muello, police said.

Christian V. Esguerra

Amok

PARTY guest Don Isla, ran amuck in a party yesterday at the Wherehouse Disco on Scout Trillo corner Timog Avenue in Barangay South Triangle in Quezon City and shot cousins Ferdinand Bungay, 20, and Eric Balda, 30, then fled on board a maroon Pajero (Plate No. TEF 900), police said. Police said the shooting was triggered by an argument between Isla and a woman guest at the birthday party of Bobby Balda, police said. Isla, who is said to be a resident of Valle Verde Subdivision, allegedly slapped the woman. Cousins Bungay and Balda tried to pacify the guests, police said. Isla fled in his Pajero after the shooting.

Agnes E. Donato

Abalos defies Pasig City in border row

By Nelson Flores

MANDALUYONG Mayor Benjamin Abalos Jr. appears to be ready for a showdown with Pasig City officials, saying he welcomes the legal battle to counter Pasig City's claim on Mandaluyong territory.

Reacting to an earlier report where Pasig staked a claim on parts of Mandaluyong City, Abalos said the boundary issue between the two cities have been settled long ago and is no longer subject to debate.

Abalos explained that there was already a settlement when the Metropolitan Manila Commission was being organized under then Metro Manila governor Imelda Marcos in the 1970s. At the time, the different local government units of Metro Manila amicably agreed to formally establish their boundaries, hence Pasig City's current claim on portions of Mandaluyong is without any basis, the mayor added.

Abalos said the MMC, a precursor of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority now under his father, Benjamin Abalos Sr., was the agency that took care of the planning and development of Metro Manila.

Although there had been instances when the agreement among the LGUs did not follow geographic lines, Abalos said all the local chief executives since the time had learned to live with the boundaries that were settled.

Abalos cited as example Mandaluyong City's southwestern boundary with Manila, where the Pasig River should be the natural boundary. Because of the agreement, portions of the eastern bank of Pasig River, where Mandaluyong City's Barangay Blumentritt is located, came under the territorial jurisdiction of Manila, and became Punta, Sta. Ana Manila.

"We have no quarrel with Manila over that," Abalos said.

The attitude of the Pasig City local government toward its neighbors appears to be unfriendly, Abalos said.

What we want is harmony, not a legal dispute with Pasig City or any of our neighbors, he added.

The Pasig government, through city legal officer Ricardo Castillo, earlier said the city is bent on claiming territories it allegedly lost to Mandaluyong and Makati.

Castillo said it is the position of the city government that the boundary between Pasig and Mandaluyong should be Epifanio De Los Santos Avenue, formerly known as Highway 54.

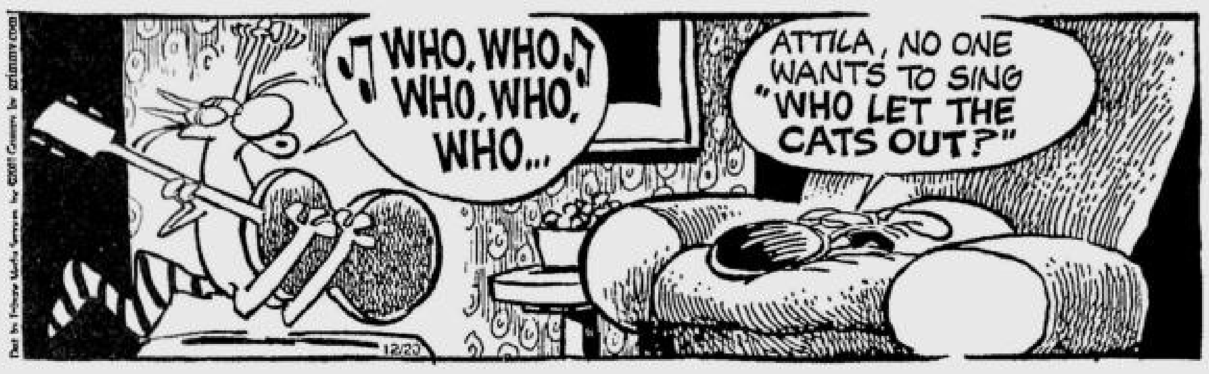
"But unfortunately, Mandaluyong has encroached and limited the Pasig border to where St. Francis Church is now located," Castillo said. "(Mandaluyong) has claimed the side where most of the commercial centers now stand, like the Edsa Shangri-La Plaza."

On their claim to Makati property, Castillo said Pasig officials have questioned the demarcation of several barangays which Pasig shares with Makati. Castillo did not name the barangays concerned.

Pasig City, a historic industrial and metropolitan area along the Pasig River, is currently embroiled in a legal battle against the municipality of Cainta.

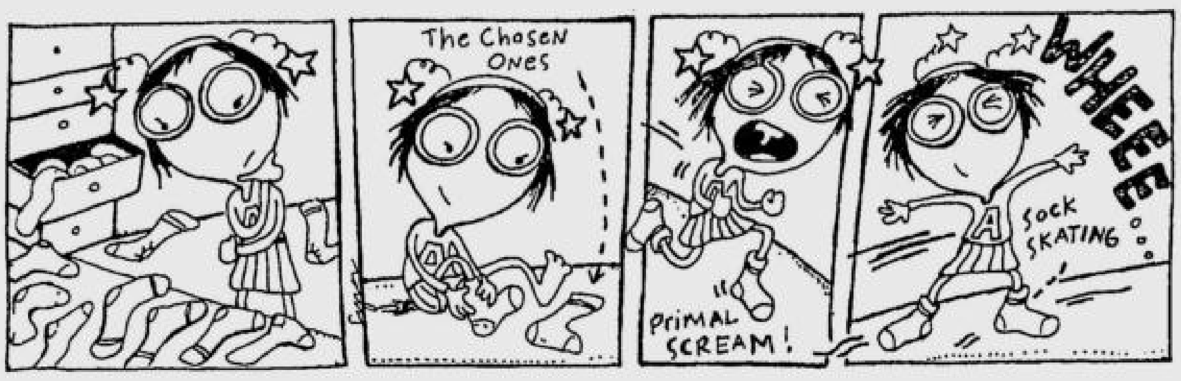
MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM

BY MIKE PETERS


♫ WHO, WHO, WHO, WHO, WHO... ♫
ATTILA, NO ONE WANTS TO SING "WHO LET THE CATS OUT?"
12/20

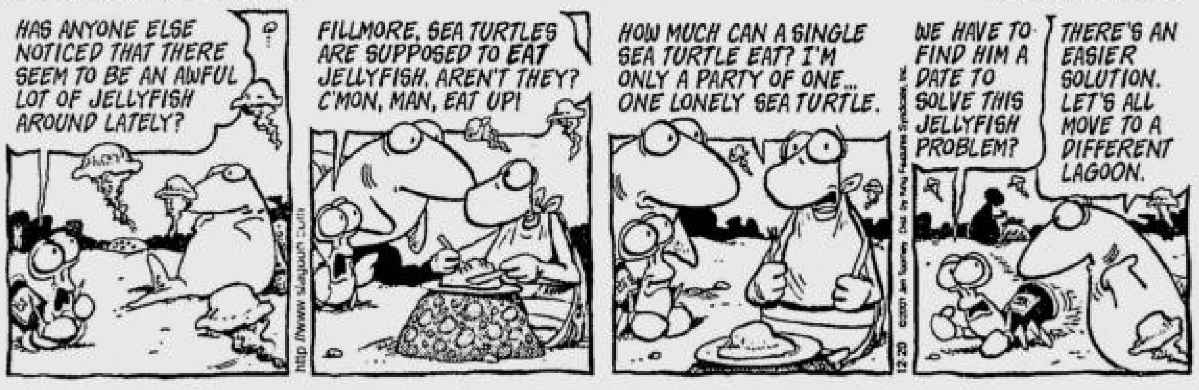
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


The Chosen Ones
Primal SCREAM!
WHEEE
Sock SKATING

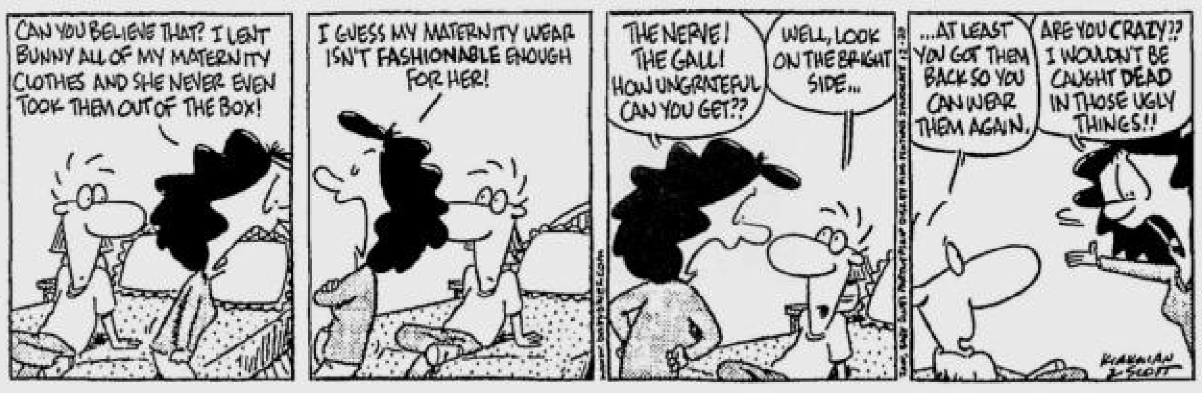
SHERMAN'S LAGOON

BY JIM TOOMEY


HAS ANYONE ELSE NOTICED THAT THERE SEEM TO BE AN AWFUL LOT OF JELLYFISH AROUND LATELY?
FILLMORE, SEA TURTLES ARE SUPPOSED TO EAT JELLYFISH, AREN'T THEY? C'MON, MAN, EAT UP!
HOW MUCH CAN A SINGLE SEA TURTLE EAT? I'M ONLY A PARTY OF ONE... ONE LONELY SEA TURTLE.
WE HAVE TO FIND HIM A DATE TO SOLVE THIS JELLYFISH PROBLEM?
THERE'S AN EASIER SOLUTION. LET'S ALL MOVE TO A DIFFERENT LAGOON.
12-20

BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT? I LENT BUNNY ALL OF MY MATERNITY CLOTHES AND SHE NEVER EVEN TOOK THEM OUT OF THE BOX!
I GUESS MY MATERNITY WEAR ISN'T FASHIONABLE ENOUGH FOR HER!
THE NERVE! THE GALL! HOW UNGRATEFUL CAN YOU GET??
WELL, LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE...
...AT LEAST YOU GOT THEM BACK SO YOU CAN WEAR THEM AGAIN.
ARE YOU CRAZY?? I WOULDN'T BE CAUGHT DEAD IN THOSE UGLY THINGS!!
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

HOROSCOPE

BY EUGENIA LAST

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Irene Dunne, Uri Geller, Jenny Agutter, Anita Baker

Happy Birthday: You have an intuitive sense of what will work for you this year, but implementing what you know may not be so easy. Expect to face obstacles but you will find the door to success. Your own strength and courage will help you deal with any dilemma you face. Your numbers are 10, 14, 25, 33, 37, 40

ARIES (March 21-April 19): You will feel an urgency to tie up loose ends as the end of the year approaches. You will have no trouble getting things done on time as long as you focus on what's necessary.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): This is a busy time of the year and you must do for your own family first. New romantic relationships or friendships will unfold if you attend festive functions.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): You may want to secure your position before you head into the New Year. Your creative side will rise to the surface today.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Travel should be on your agenda so you can enjoy the company of good friends and family. Entertainment will be stimulating especially if you do something that is thought provoking.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): You will have to take a little time out to fix something for an older family member. Your good spirit will be appreciated.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Spend some time with the one you love. Go shopping together or enjoy a quiet evening with one another. This is a great day to talk about your future vacations.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): You will be surprised by the recognition you receive from others. Take time to get together with co-workers for a little festive cheer.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Entertainment will be conducive to meeting love interests or new friends. Your ability to get things done will be impressive and could even lead to a promotion.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): It's time to rethink your personal life. Don't let yourself become entangled in a secret affair. Your decisions will be favorable if they are well thought out.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Your involvement in functions will go better than you anticipate. Get together with a past partner and find out if you still have an interest.

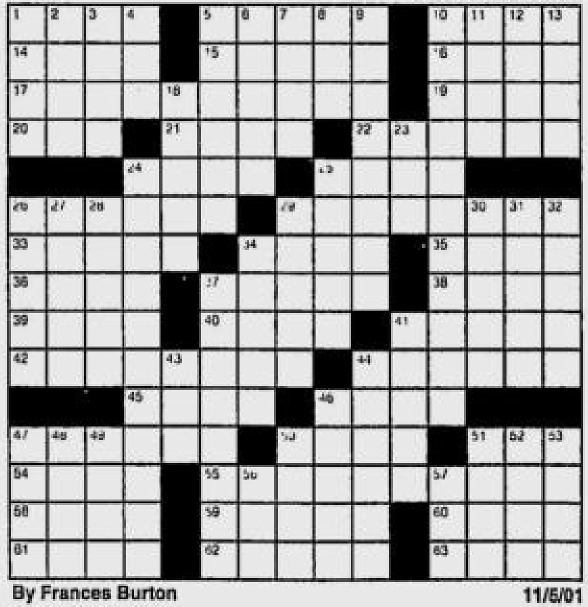
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You should be thinking about your future. Focus on your professional direction and what you have to do in order to make it more profitable.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): This can be a sad time of the year as you ponder over the year gone past. Don't let your emotions get the better of you.

Birthday Baby: Your vision is clear. You are observant, intuitive and well prepared to deal with just about anything. Your sensitive nature will help you relate to those you meet.

DAILY CROSSWORD

TMSPuzzles@aol.com



By Frances Burton
Summerville, GA

11/5/01

ACROSS
1 __ carotene
5 Frenzied
10 Dance movement
14 Famous cookie man
15 Fight venue
16 "Little Man __"
17 Large chimney
19 Art Deco designer
20 Formed a lap
21 Wire spiral
22 Pencil end
24 Skeleton piece
25 Did the butterfly
26 Bobbins
29 Irish clover
33 Spooky
34 Hockey score
35 Sign of things to come
36 & others
37 Flash on and off
38 __-majesty
39 Sacred observance
40 Enrage
41 Red tide and kelp
42 Muscle-building hormones
44 Slings mud
45 Nutmeg spice
46 Marquee name
47 2nd Gospel
50 Feathery scarves
51 Actress Sandra
54 Satie or Estrada
55 Deep thought
58 Entice
59 Made public
60 Bancroft or Meara
61 Goneril's father
62 Contemptible cads
63 Garden legumes

DOWN
1 Quartet member
2 Jane Austen novel
3 Horn honk
4 Question
5 Bricklayers
6 Jazz clarinetist Shaw
7 Actress Patricia
8 End of a bus.?
9 Cinch
10 Road smoother
11 Jolly old salts
12 Diminutive ending
13 Equal
18 French school
23 Ewe's mate
24 Purdue player
25 Classic Alan Ladd movie
26 Oracles
27 __ fours
28 Speak in a formal manner
29 Makes dirty
30 Last symbol
31 Actor Romero
32 Housemaid's joints
34 Move smoothly
37 Offensive remark
41 Stockpile
43 Boat propeller
44 Groups of trees
46 Planted seeds
47 Find a buyer
48 Faithful
49 Actress Sorvino
50 Half a Polynesian island?
51 Frank Herbert sci-fi classic
52 Irish writer O'Brien
53 "For Your __ Only"
56 Duran Duran song
57 Light knock

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

S	P	E	E	C	H	■	M	E	S	S	M	A	T	E
P	A	N	C	H	O	■	A	L	O	P	E	C	I	A
A	L	P	H	A	S	■	T	I	B	E	T	A	N	S
C	A	L	O	R	I	F	I	C	■	W	E	D	G	E
E	T	A	■	M	E	R	L	I	N	■	R	I	E	L
B	I	N	S	■	R	E	D	T	O	P	■	A	S	S
A	N	E	L	E	■	E	A	S	I	E	R	■	■	■
R	E	D	E	E	M	■	■	■	R	E	E	D	I	T
■	■	■	W	O	O	F	E	D	■	K	A	R	M	A
H	I	C	■	C	A	L	M	E	R	■	L	I	M	P
O	N	U	S	■	N	A	P	L	E	S	■	V	E	E
B	A	R	E	S	■	P	R	E	S	U	M	E	R	S
A	N	T	E	L	O	P	E	■	E	G	O	I	S	T
R	E	S	P	I	R	E	S	■	E	A	R	N	E	R
T	R	Y	S	T	E	R	S	■	D	R	E	S	S	Y

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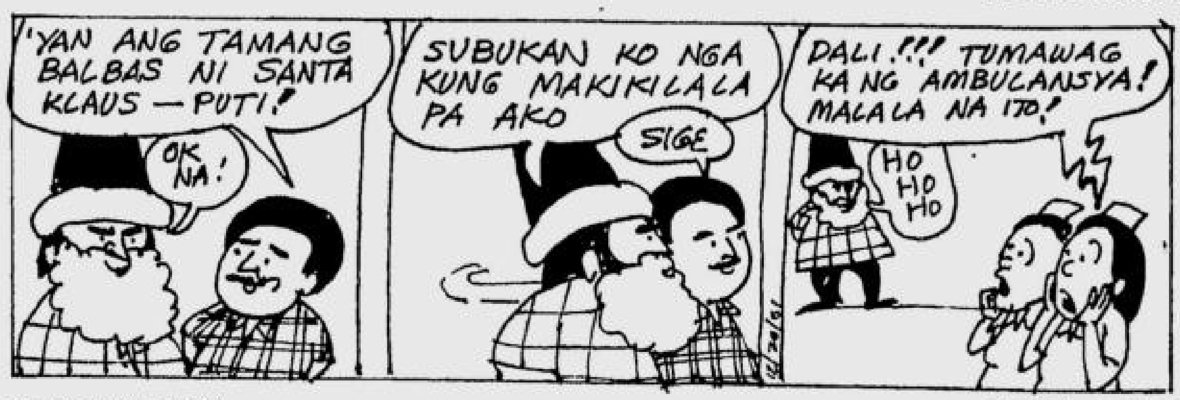
11/5/01

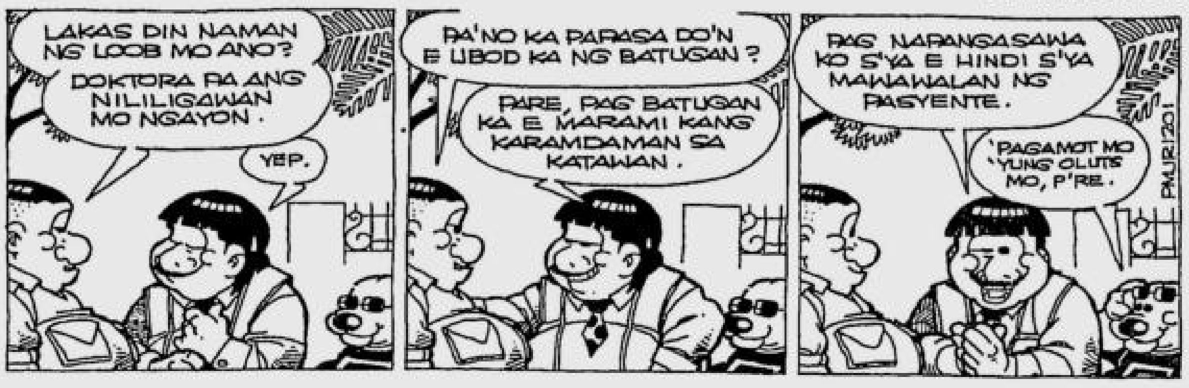
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


'YAN ANG TAMANG BALBAS NI SANTA KLAUS — PUTI!
OK NA!
SUBUKAN KO NGA KUNG MAKIKILALA PA AKO
SIGE
DALI!!! TUMAWAG KA NG AMBULANSYA! MALALA NA ITO!
HO HO HO

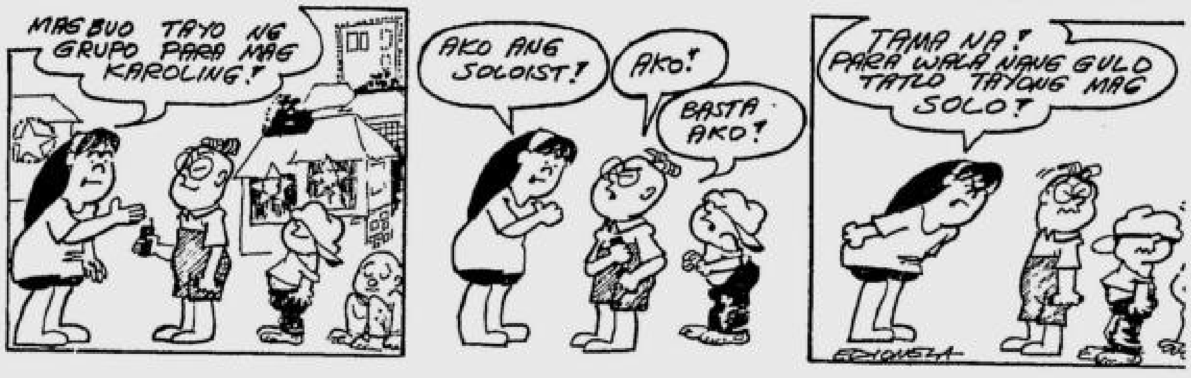
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


LAKAS DIN NAMAN NG LOOB MO ANO?
DOKTORA PA ANG NILILIGAWAN MO NGAYON.
YEP.
PA'NO KA PAPASA DO'N E UBOD KA NG BATUGAN?
PARE, PAG BATUGAN KA E MARAMI KANG KARAMDAMAN SA KATAWAN.
PAG NAPANGASAWA KO S'YA E HINDI S'YA MAWAWALAN NG PASYENTE.
'PAGAMOT MO 'YUNG OLUTS MO, P'RE.
PMJR12O1

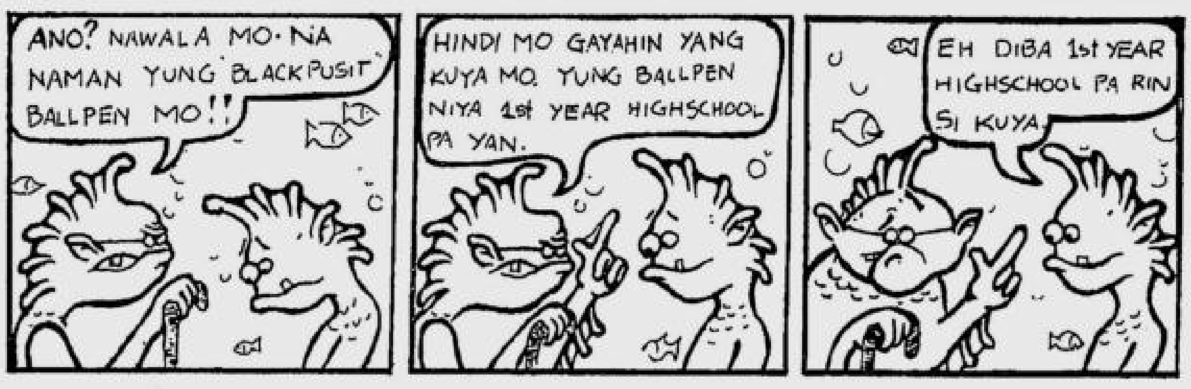
SIMO

BY EDGAR DIONELA


MAGBUO TAYO NG GRUPO PARA MAG KAROLING!
AKO ANG SOLOIST!
AKO!
BASTA AKO!
TAMA NA! PARA WALA NANG GULO TATLO TAYONG MAG SOLO!
EDIONELA

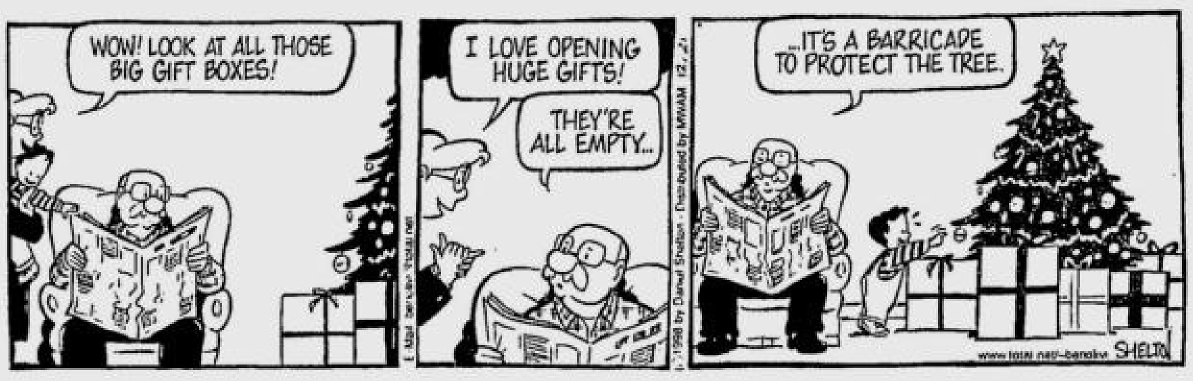
CHICHOY CHOKOY

BY IKOY RICIO


ANO? NAWALA MO NA NAMAN YUNG BLACK PUSIT BALLPEN MO!!
HINDI MO GAYAHIN YANG KUYA MO. YUNG BALLPEN NIYA 1st YEAR HIGHSCHOOL PA YAN.
EH DIBA 1st YEAR HIGHSCHOOL PA RIN SI KUYA

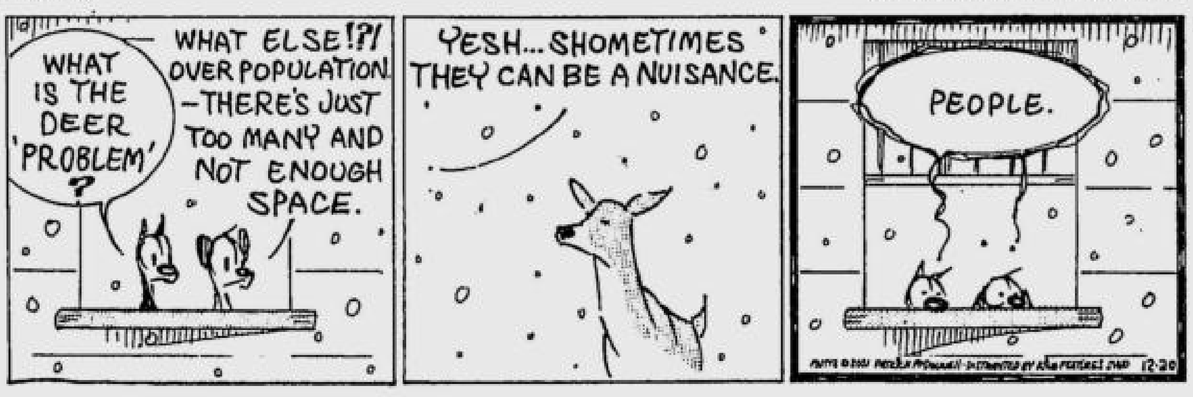
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


WOW! LOOK AT ALL THOSE BIG GIFT BOXES!
I LOVE OPENING HUGE GIFTS!
THEY'RE ALL EMPTY...
...IT'S A BARRICADE TO PROTECT THE TREE.
SHELTON

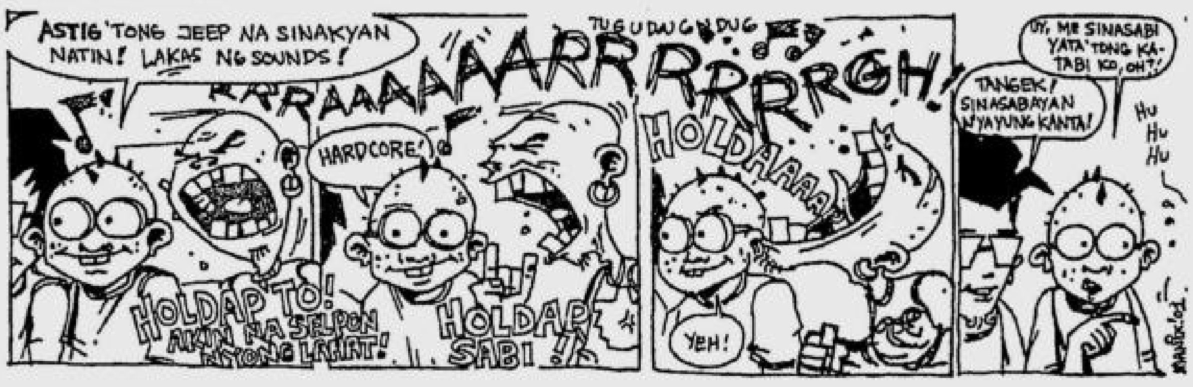
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


WHAT IS THE DEER 'PROBLEM'?
WHAT ELSE!?! OVER POPULATION. —THERE'S JUST TOO MANY AND NOT ENOUGH SPACE.
YESH...SHOMETIMES THEY CAN BE A NUISANCE.
PEOPLE.
12-20

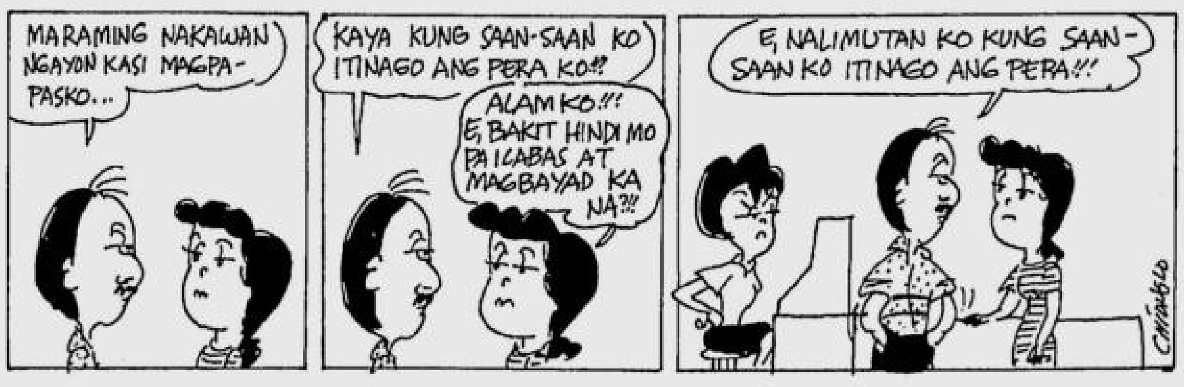
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


ASTIG 'TONG JEEP NA SINAKYAN NATIN! LAKAS NG SOUNDS!
TUGUDUGUDUG
RRRAAAAAAARRRRRRGH!
HARDCORE!
HOLDAP 'TO! AKIN NA SELPON NYONG LAHAT!
HOLDAP SABI!!
HOLDAAAAA
YEH!
OY, ME SINASABI YATA 'TONG KATABI KO, OH?!
TANGEK! SINASABAYAN NYA YUNG KANTA!
HU HU HU
MANIX

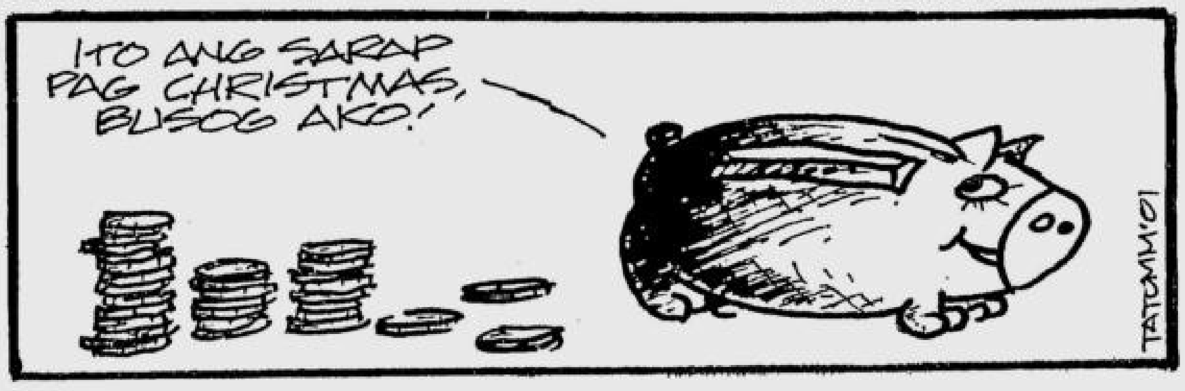
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


MARAMING NAKAWAN NGAYON KASI MAGPA-PASKO...
KAYA KUNG SAAN-SAAN KO ITINAGO ANG PERA KO!!
ALAM KO!!! E, BAKIT HINDI MO PAILABAS AT MAGBAYAD KA NA?!!
E, NALIMUTAN KO KUNG SAAN-SAAN KO ITINAGO ANG PERA!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU & TATUM MILAMBILING


ITO ANG SARAP PAG CHRISTMAS, BUSOG AKO!
TATUMM'01

Christmas bar tour in Makati

THE GORGEOUS models of the Mild Seven Team are ready to give away Christmas prizes and cool items as they barhop around the Makati area this weekend.

Catch them on Friday at Whistlestop, I12O, Padi's Point Pasay Road, Cable Car Pasay Road, Buma, Stixx Bar, Café Overdrive and Stars venue.

On Saturday, Dec. 22, the team will visit Hard Rock Café, Cable Car, Tequila Joe's, Che Cigar, Cork, Hutu's Hut, Grilla and Padi's Point Jupiter.

AYALA CINEMAS
NOW SHOWING

YOUR 24-HOUR LINK TO ALL AYALA CINEMAS 729 - 7777
reserve seats through www.sureseats.com

All Digital Sounding

GLORIETTA 1 formerly QUAD

1	SUMMER CATCH	In SONY DYNAMIC DIGITAL SOUND
2	EARTHQUAKE	In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
3	WOLF GIRL	In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
4	THE MUSKETEER	In DTS DIGITAL SOUND

GLORIETTA 4

1	MONSTERS, INC.	In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
2	THE SCORE	In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
3	SUMMER CATCH THX	In DSD/SDDS/DTS DIGITAL SOUND
4	BEST OF CINEMANILA 2001 Art Film	In DTS DIGITAL SOUND
5	MVP: MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE	In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
6	HARRY POTTER	In DTS/SDDS DIGITAL SOUND
7	ROCKSTAR	In DTS DIGITAL SOUND

GREENBELT

1	BEST OF CINEMANILA 2001	In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
2	BEST OF CINEMANILA 2001	In SONY DYNAMIC DIGITAL SOUND
3	BEST OF CINEMANILA 2001	In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
4	REGINE AT THE MOVIES DEC. 21, 22, 28, 29, 30 Onstage	

ALABANG TOWN CENTER

1	SUMMER CATCH THX	In DSD/SDDS DIGITAL SOUND
2	MVP: MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE	In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
3	THE SCORE	In DTS DIGITAL SOUND
4	MONSTERS, INC.	In DTS DIGITAL SOUND
5	HARRY POTTER	In DTS DIGITAL SOUND

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION

MOVIE GUIDE
NOW SHOWING
EMAIL: mmta@asia.com

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

1 (DDS)	MONSTERS, INC.
2 (SDDS)	MUSKETEER
3 (DTS)	HARRY POTTER
4 GOLD (DTS)	ROCKSTAR
5 GOLD (DOLBY)	THE SCORE
6 GOLD (SDDS)	SUMMER CATCH
7 GOLD (DOLBY)	CAPT. CORRELLI'S
8	SERENDIPITY
9	EARTHQUAKE
10	WOLF GIRL

Pearl Plaza Cinemas
(Parañaque) tel. 853.4486

1	
2	
3 (DTS)	NAIIBANG HAYOP
4	
5	ALIPIN NG TUKSO
6 (DTS)	
Golden Pearl THX	

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 831.6603

1	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
2	NAIIBANG HAYOP
3	ALIPIN NG TUKSO

starmall Movies
(Shaw Blvd.) tel 724.4986

1	MAGIC DRAGON BALL
2	FIREBALL JACK
3	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	WOLF GIRL
5	ALIPIN NG TUKSO

METROPOLIS star
543.3927 loc. 150

1	BOLD AFFAIR
2	TALONG
3	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
4	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
5	WOLF GIRL
6	MAGIC DRAGON BALL
7	RESERVE
8	RESERVE

PREMIERE CINEMA THX
(Makati City) tel 751.2011 to13

1	RESERVE

Center Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1	KAPITAN AMBO
2	PAGDATING NG PANAHON

FCM FAIRVIEW CENTER MALL, INC.
tel 930.9515

1	RESERVE
2	BOLD AFFAIR
3	NAIIBANG HAYOP

Spring
(Libertad, Pasay City) tel 831.7864

1	NAIIBANG HAYOP
A	ALIPIN NG TUKSO

Sunshine
(FTI, Taguig) tel 838.4301 loc. 3376

1	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
2	ALIPIN NG TUKSO
3	NAIIBANG HAYOP
4	BOLD AFFAIR

GOTESCO CINEMA

City
(Manila) tel 734.8568

1 (DOLBY)	RESERVE
2	RESERVE
3	RESERVE
4	MUSKETEER
5	EARTHQUAKE
6	WOLF GIRL
7 (DTS)	RESERVE
8 (SDDS)	SUMMER CATCH
9 (DOLBY)	HARRY POTTER

Caloocan
tel 362.3508

2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT

Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 364.3781

1	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
2	WOLF GIRL
3	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
4 (SDDS)	RESERVE
5	MUSKETEER
6 (DOLBY)	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
7 (DTS)	HARRY POTTER
8	RESERVE
9	RESERVE

Commonwealth
tel 951.0083

1 (DTS)	RESERVE
2	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
3	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
4	RESERVE
5 (SDDS)	WOLF GIRL
6	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
7 (DOLBY)	HARRY POTTER
8	RESERVE

Ortigas
tel 656.6795

1	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
2	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
3 (DTS)	HARRY POTTER
4	RESERVE
5 (SDDS)	RESERVE

Universal
(Manila) tel 733.2470

1	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT

Sampaguita
(Cubao) tel 911.7888

1	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT

Dilson
(Manila) tel 734.7724

Dilson
Lords
Jennet

MARKETPLACE Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1	OPENS DEC. 25, 2001
2	OPENS DEC. 25, 2001
3	OPENS DEC. 25, 2001

Prima
(Pasig) tel 641.1215

3	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT

Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
SUPER CINERAMA
tel 733.4238

1 (DOLBY)	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
2	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
3	RESERVE
4	RESERVE
5	RESERVE

New Divisoria Mall
DIVISORIA CINEMA
tel 244.4619

1	NAIIBANG HAYOP
2	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
3	ALIPIN NG TUKSO
4	RESERVE
5	RESERVE
6	MAGIC DRAGON BALL

Baclaran LRT
LRT CINEMA
tel 512.0115

1 (DOLBY)	
2	

Berma
tel 879.2029

1	ALIPIN NG TUKSO
2	NAIIBANG HAYOP

CitiMall
(Parañaque) tel 820.7269

1	NAIIBANG HAYOP
2	ALIPIN NG TUKSO

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa Laguna)
tel (049) 534.2185 / 534.2198

1	MVP
2	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
3 (DTS)	SUMMER CATCH

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1	MVP
2 (DTS)	GLITTER
3 (DOLBY)	HARRY POTTER
4	SUMMER CATCH

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146

1	EARTHQUAKE
2 (DOLBY)	MVP
3 (DTS)	HARRY POTTER
4	SUMMER CATCH

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1	IRON LADIES
2	OTHER SIDE OF THE LAW
3	SOON TO OPEN
4	SOON TO OPEN

Cinema 2000 MovieTown
(Tarlac)

1	THE SCORE
2	ROCKSTAR
3 (DOLBY)	TIKIM
4 (DTS)	OTHER SIDE OF THE LAW

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 (SDDS)	MAGENTA
2	NAIIBANG HAYOP
3	ALIPIN NG TUKSO
4 (DTS)	BOLD AFFAIR

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 (DOLBY)	EARTHQUAKE
2	MVP
3 (DTS)	SUMMER CATCH
4	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
5	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT

Olivarez Tri-Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883

1	BAKIT DI TOTOHANIN
2	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
3	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT

Olivarez Los Baños
tel (049) 249-2558

1	BAKIT DI TOTOHANIN
2	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
3	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT

Olivarez Tagaytay
tel (046) 413.0311

1	TALONG
2	ROSARIO 13
3	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT

Morales Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.9736

1	EARTHQUAKE
2	MVP
3	SUMMER CATCH

Cabuyao
(Laguna City) tel (049) 531.4808

1 (DTS)	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
2 (DTS)	

Emperor
(Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657

1	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
2	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
3	JEEPERS CREEPERS

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

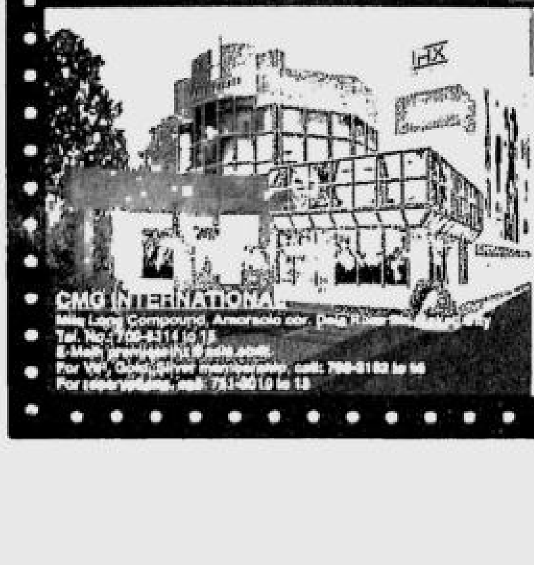
1	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
2	CAPT. CORRELLI'S
3	SUMMER CATCH
4	OTHER SIDE OF THE LAW

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 (DOLBY EX)	MUSKETEER
2	THE SCORE
3	JOY RIDE
4 (DTS ES)	GLADIATOR

*Movies are subject to change without prior notice

ADVANCED SCREENING THX DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS



PREMIERE CINEMA THX NOW SHOWING

CLUB 5
NOW OPEN
TEL. 751-2010 TO 13

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State-Of-The-Art-Cinemas
NOW SHOWING
e-mail: htc@netasia-mnl.net
http://www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

GALLERIA 633-9115-16/633-7041 loc. 279

1	HARRY POTTER
2	MONSTER, INC.
3	THE SCORE
4	WOLF GIRL
5	SUMMER CATCH
6	EARTHQUAKE
7	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
8	MUSKETEER
9	CHOCOLAT
10	RUSH HOUR 2

ERMITA 536-7809 TO 12

1	SUMMER CATCH
2	WOLF GIRL
3	THE SCORE
4	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
5	EARTHQUAKE
6	HARRY POTTER
7	MUSKETEER

METRO EAST 632-9115-16 / 633-7041

1	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
2	HARRY POTTER
3	THE SCORE
4	MONSTERS, INC.
5	MUSKETEER
6	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
7	SUMMER CATCH
8	RUSH HOUR 2

NOVALICHES 936-3229 to 31

1	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
2	SUMMER CATCH
3	WOLF GIRL
4	WOLF GIRL
5	EARTHQUAKE
6	MUSKETEER
7	HARRY POTTER
8	MONSTERS, INC.

IMUS (046) 471-8190

1	HARRY POTTER
2	EARTHQUAKE
3	SUMMER CATCH
4	MUSKETEER
5	PISNGI
6	WOLF GIRL

BACOLOD (034) 441-0459 / 0458

1	HARRY POTTER
2	MUSKETEER
3	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
4	JOY RIDE
5	DON'T SAY A WORD
6	CAPT. CORRELLI'S

ILOILO (033) 336-8077 / 8078

1	HARRY POTTER
2	ROCKSTAR
3	TIKIM
4	IRON LADIES
5	HARRY POTTER
6	ROCKSTAR

MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

ARANETA CENTER THEATERS 911-3101

ALI MALL CINEPLEX-1	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-2	SUTLA (RE-ISSUE)
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-3 (DDS)	MUSKETEER
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-4 (SDDS)	HARRY POTTER
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-5 (DTS)	EARTHQUAKE
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-6 (DOLBY)	MVP
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-7 (DOLBY)	SUMMER CATCH
FARMERS PLAZA-1 (DOLBY)	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
FARMERS PLAZA-2 (DOLBY)	PISNGI
FIESTA CARNIVAL	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
NEW FRONTIER	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

MANILA

EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	MARITAL RAPE / EROTIC DIARIES
ODEON	EARTHQUAKE
ODEON-2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
ROBEN	PISNGI
TANDEM-1	SEX MEDUSA
TANDEM-2	SEX EDUCATION
TIMES	PUKYUTAN / STORY OF US

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	CLOSED
ACT-4	CLOSED
CORONET-2	ORIGINAL SIN
QUEZON-1	PUKYUTAN
REMAR	PISNGI
REMAR-2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	NAIIBANG HAYOP
B	ALIPIN NG TUKSO
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA-2	THE MUSKETEER

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	ROCKSTAR
CINEMA-2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
CINEMA-3	HUWAG KANG KIKIBO
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	THE SCORE
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CINEMA-6	OTHER SIDE OF THE LAW
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CINEMA-9 (DTS)	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	SUMMER CATCH
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	EARTHQUAKE
CINEMA-12	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
CINEMA-14	MUSKETEER
CINEMA-15	PAGDATING NG PANAHON

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ENTERTAINMENT

LOUIE C. CAMINO, Editor

To rock hell–and back

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

AMONG the younger male leads in Hollywood's, **Mark Wahlberg** has gained a solid reputation for versatility. Popular actors tend to play types rather than unique, believable characters, but Wahlberg delights in bucking trends. He opts opting for the odd-men-out in the movie world's thespic gallery, audaciously portraying characters as diverse as porn stars and spacemen.

The latest addition to Wahlberg's gallery of screen rogues is the title character in "Rock Star," a devotee of the metallica band, the Steel Dragons, who gets so caught up in his idols' music and lifestyle that he ends up being a part of it.

At first, he and his girlfriend (**Jennifer Aniston**) are ecstatic when Wahlberg's character is tapped to replace the hit band's lead singer. After the first blush of success has ebbed, however, harsh reality intrudes.

Little by little, they realize that the band's music isn't the only thing that's different about the group. In their hot, fetid, little universe, *everything* has been perverted to suit the rock world's cynical conventions:

The rock stars are veritable demi-gods who create their own rules. Since women throw themselves at them with perfervid abandon, their wives and girlfriends have to "understand" that they must "share" their men with all those randy groupies out there.

But that's "Ok," because the obliging wives and girlfriends are also "allowed" to play around, tit for that.

Except that Aniston's character is too "conservative" and "naïve" to agree to those terms. So, after three months of trying to cope, she opts out and, with some friends, puts up a coffee shop.

How boring!, the rock groupies scream. How stupid is this dame, to give up the excitement and glamour of the rock-music world for—a coffee shop?!

But Aniston has gazed deep into the putrid heart of the rock universe, and realizes that, if she doesn't escape now, she never will.

As for Wahlberg, he has much more at stake, so he stays on. And, without his even knowing it, he is slowly but inexorably transformed into someone who is as monstrous as the original members of the devilish band.

Luckily for him, he too is able to make a break before film's end. His way out is a young man who's exactly like he was at the start of the movie: a devotee so fixated on the band that he can sing all of its songs. Having found his replacement, Wahlberg escapes.

It's a good thing that he manages to get away, to sing again another day—but no longer in the dark and deadly metal-rock mold. As he tries to put the broken pieces of his life back together again, he realizes that he's been to rock hell—and back.

Wahlberg's performance is the movie's dramatic fulcrum, but other actors also come on strong in this production, many of them coming up with on-target characterizations of the helpless, hopeless denjzens of this modern-day, musical Hades.

The film's actors and production values have a powerful effect on viewers, but its most telling moments are its insights into the devilish "contract" implicitly entered into by these metal-rockers and their fans:

As explained to Wahlberg by some jaded characters in the film, rockers have to live their aberrant lifestyle because this is what their fans want. Their fans are mostly male and lacking in real prospects in life, so they are attracted to the metal-rock scene because of its primitive power and lack of rules.

So, they insist that rockers bed one woman after another, flout society's roles, trash hotel rooms and generally act like beasts because that's the fans' fantasy life.

Rock fans live through the rockers' excesses, and if the rockers don't oblige by trashing their own lives, the fans look for other rockers who are more willing to be corrupted. A chilling thought!

My Christmas gifts for the stars

DOLLYWOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

SINCE my show biz friends can afford to buy everything they desire and deserve this Christmas, I would rather give them symbolical holiday tokens, my little way of thanking them for being part of my life and letting me be a part of theirs.

Pops Fernandez: A sifter so that the next time love comes around, she would be able to sort things out before it all gets mixed up.

Princess Punzalan: A forever smiling shadow to keep her company because she's living alone.

Liezl Martinez: A store of her own to showcase her Whatta Relief furniture, for the dedicated businesswoman in her!

Dina Bonnevie: An alarm clock that will warn her before she falls in love again.

Korina Sanchez: A microscope to help her decipher if she has finally found Mr. Right.

Ces Drilon: A stopwatch to remind her to slow down once in awhile.

Lorna Tolentino: To have her cloned so that there will be more kind-hearted people like her in the biz.

Jessica Rodriguez: A huge freezer where she can hide and freeze all her cherished moments away from public scrutiny.

Bojo Molina: A fast-forwarder machine so that he wouldn't have to wait too long to marry his gorgeous fiancée Anna.

Monsour del Rosario: An Olympic medal for painstakingly training young kids to excel in sports.

To be continued in my next column.

Ryan reconciles with GF

I HAD a blast at the foam party of **Ryan Agoncillo**'s ultra cool bar Mazzo (in Libis).

Ryan and his ever-gracious business partners **James Fabros** and **Ralph Javier** certainly know how to redefine fun and they are set to come up with other exciting events for the holidays.

Ryan and I have this running joke that he's the long lost brother of Harry Potter. Don't they have a striking resemblance?

That night, I had all the more reason to tease him because I've never seen him any happier. From the looks of it, Ryan and his Filipino-Chinese girlfriend have reconciled. I didn't have to confirm it with Ryan because the glow on his face outshines all the Christmas lights combined.

Christmas in Canada

I WAS one of the guests in the Christmas episode of GMA 7's "Sis," which we taped last week. **Gelli de Belen** told me that she, **Ariel** (**Rivera**) and their two sons will spend the holidays in Canada where Ariel's family is based.

The Rivera kids, **Joaqui** and **Julio**, could pass for twins.

Hopefully, Ariel and Gelli will have a baby girl made in Canada when they return.

Single again

JANICE de Belen is apparently relishing her new-found freedom, although it's understandable why she turned misty-eyed when Ariel sang a Christmas love song. It's her very first Christmas as a "single" woman again.

I know how it feels. Sometimes you think it's over but you don't exactly feel it's over. Been there and had to stay there for awhile, before my heart took over for the next spin.

Christmas is no longer an excuse to be with someone just for the heck of it, right *Kumareng* Janice?

Luigi, her lovechild with **Aga Muhlach**, has grown up to be such a charmer. He no longer wants to be called Igi Boy. I remember those days when he would play with my kids. I would not be surprised if he soon becomes the next endorser of a clothing store *a la* **KC Concepcion** or **Borgy Manotoc**. Good genes ought to be shown off to the max!

I noticed that Luigi is not as rambunctious as his dad when Aga was at the height of his bachelor days. When Janice asked Luigi what he wants for Christmas, he impishly said, "A car, mom!"

The mom was floored and she told him, "Sorry I can't afford that yet!"

Paging, Daddy Aga! You gave Charlene a Benz when you got engaged, so I'm sure you could easily give your eldest boy a brand new car this Christmas.

But of course, spending time with your loved ones this Christmas sure beats spending money on them. No doubt that Aga is trying his best to have time and money well-spent on Luigi even if he already has twins with Charlene. That does not make him love his firstborn any less.

Holiday tip

'TIS the season to indulge and bulge. As our pockets thin after all the Christmas shopping, our tummies swell with all the holiday festivities.

If you want to lose weight safely and sanely, just e-mail me.

Surprise yourself just as I did!

For feedback, e-mail wateringhole2000@yahoo.com

Chito Roño combines art and commerce

IF there's one director who successfully combines art and commerce, it's got to be Chito Roño. This is best shown the last few years at the Metro Manila Film Festival where his movies made money and won awards.

Last year his entry, MAQ-RoadRunners' "Spirit Warriors" was the topgrosser and went home with technical awards.

In this year's filmfest (Dec. 25-Jan. 3), Roño also has an entry, "Yamashita: The Tiger's Treasure," again produced by MAQ and RoadRunner.

In terms of star, story and production values, "Yamashita" eclipses "Spirit Warriors."

"Yamashita" boasts of mind-blowing special effects and topbills actors of different generations, led by the revered Armando Goyena, matinee idol of the '50s. In the movie, he plays World War II survivor who holds the key to the fabled treasure.

Other stars include Vic Diaz, Goyena's contemporary in the '50s who concentrated on kontrabida roles; Albert Martinez and Rustom Padilla, romantic heroes of the '80s and '90s who turned serious actors; and teenage idols Danilo Barrios and Camille Prats.

Also playing important roles are Carlo Muñoz as the young Armando Goyena, Japanese actor Tetsuya Matsui as the young Vic Diaz and Janus del Prado as the ill-fated boy during the Japanese occupation.

Bearwin Meily, Mico Palanca and Ethan Javier are Danilo's *barkada,* who unwittingly get involved in the search for the treasure.

The RoadRunner's geniuses came up with special effects—airplanes, ships, thousands of extras, World War II scenes—comparable to Hollywood super-productions like "Titanic" and "Pearl Harbor."

"Yamashita: The Tiger's Treasure" is expected to surpass the record of "Spirit Warriors," with more awards and bigger box-office returns.

In the previous years, Roño also megged films for MAQ Productions which became filmfest entries.

He combined art and commerce in "Dahas" (1995) and "Nasaan ang Puso" (1997).

"Dahas" was adjudged second best picture and gave Richard Gomez the best actor award. It was also a blockbuster.

"Nasaan ang Puso" was best picture and won the Gatpuno Antonio J. Villegas Cultural award.

It also won awards for Roño (best director), Ronaldo Valdez (best supporting actor) and Roy Iglesias (best screenplay).

Like "Dahas," "Nasaan ang Puso" was a moneymaker.

"YAMASHITA" director Chito Roño (right) on the set with actor Rustom Padilla.

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GREENBELT 2	Detector (Norway)	This is My Moon (Sri Lanka)	Nang Nak (Thailand)	Spinning Gasing (Malaysia)
GREENBELT 3	The Price of Milk (New Zealand)	Clouds of May (Turkey)	Dong Birely (Thailand)	Roads & Bridges (USA)
GLORIETTA 4	Firefly Dreams (Japan)	Batang West Side 11:40 AM/ 6:00 PM w/ Batang Trapo	Batang West Side 11:40 AM/ 6:00 PM w/ Batang Trapo	Batang West Side 11:40 AM/ 6:00 PM w/ Batang Trapo

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BUSINESS

RAUL O. MARCELO, Editor CORRIE S. NARISMA, Assistant Editor

Import slump buoys RP trade surplus

BY DORIS C. DUMLAO

A SHARP drop in imports helped boost the country's October trade surplus to its highest since February, preserving foreign exchange reserves but indicating a weak economy, analysts said.

But the National Statistics Office said yesterday that imports fell 16.9 percent in October from a year ago, the sharpest drop since December 1998, and followed a 15.9-percent fall in September.

For the 10 months to October, the bill for foreign-made merchandise declined 4.2 percent to $25.369 billion, the NSO said.

Most Philippine imports are electronics components used as intermediate goods in the export sector. A fall signals that exports will be weak in succeeding months.

The country registered a trade surplus of $570 million in October, up from a surplus of $545 million in the same month last year.

"This looks bad. Although there's a surplus contributing to a stable peso, consumer spending actually is not doing so well. The economy is not expanding," said Jomar Lacson, an analyst at DBS Vickers Securities.

Westlink Global Equities head of research James Lago said the continued fall in the bill for electronics only reflected the continuing weak demand for technology products in the international market.

AB Capital Securities analyst Jose Vistan said belt-tightening measures by the public and private sectors in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks were expected to worsen the import contraction starting October.

"The earliest recovery would not be seen until the latter part of the first semester of next year," he said.

Despite the import slump, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas did not ease credit at its weekly policy meeting later yesterday.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said any further cuts in benchmark overnight interest rates were likely only in the new year after a fresh review.

However, he said he expected annual inflation in December to come in at a year-low of 4 to 4.2 percent, indicating some scope for monetary easing.

The BSP cut its rates by a quarter percentage point last week, bringing overnight rates to a fresh six-year low of 7.75 percent for borrowing and 10 percent for lending.

Buenaventura had earlier said last week's cut could be the last this year.

The Philippines has been relying on domestic demand to fuel economic growth during 2001 in the absence of growth in demand for the country's goods in the United States and Japan, its major export markets.

October export figures, which were announced earlier in the month, fell 13.5 percent year-on-year to $2.941 billion.

Imports in October dropped to $2.371 billion, the lowest since February, compared with $2.854 billion during October 2000.

Exports in the January-October period were at $26.875 billion, down 14 percent from the previous year, while imports in the period were at $25.369 billion, down 4.2 percent.

IMPORT/ B3

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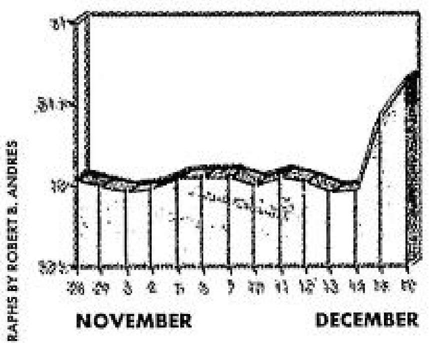

GRAPHS BY ROBERT B. ANDRES

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Dec. 19, 2001

¥ 128.14 = $1
As of 5 p.m.,
Dec. 19, 2001

GOLD:$278.90/279.40
per ounce Hong Kong,
Dec. 19, 2001

STOCK MARKET

Shares up slightly

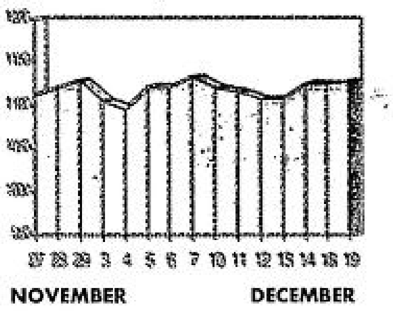
SHARES closed higher yesterday on select buying in blue chips fueled by Wall Street's overnight gains, traders said.

The 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index ended up 5.01 points, or 0.5 percent, at 1129.41, after falling 0.01 percent Tuesday.

"There was select blue chip trading," said Equitable PCI Bank fund manager Edison Yap, adding some investors may also be adjust-

SHARES/ B3

PSE Composite Index



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Poll says RP 2002 growth to slow to 2.86%

PHILIPPINE economic growth is likely to slow to 2.86 percent in 2002 from an expected 3 percent this year as the global slowdown bites, a Reuters poll showed yesterday.

"Things have been going better than expected on the domestic front, but I don't think that can last forever with the global slowdown," said Graham Parry of Lehman Brothers, one of 10 economists polled.

The economy grew by a slightly better-than-forecast 2.9 percent in the third quarter, backed by strong domestic consumption, stepping above the recession woes which have plagued the rest of the region.

The government announced it was on track to meet a full-year target of 3.3 percent gross domestic product growth.

But economists said that would require 3.7-percent growth in the fourth quarter, an optimistic figure since the effects of the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States, and the war in Afghanistan have still to play out.

"With the economy's growth seen slowing down in the first half (of 2002), GDP growth would drop to 1.5 percent before it goes up to 2.5 percent in the second half, primarily driven by the manufacturing sector, services and personal consumption," said Song Seng Wung, G.K. Goh's regional economist.

GDP GROWTH FORECASTS (percent)

	2001	2002
GK Goh	2.8	2.0
ING Barings	3.0	3.5
Philippine Partners	2.9	2.0
ABN Amro	3.0	2.9
JP Morgan Chase	3.0	2.4
Lehman Brothers	3.0	3.2
Abacus Securities	3.1	2.7
ATR Kim Eng Securities	3.0	3.5
DBS Vickers Securities	3.0	3.5
4CAST	3.2	2.9
Average	3.0	2.86

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Enemy slighted

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

WHO is behind all this attack? It is not clear. Who is the target? Now this is clear. By now it is, in military parlance, enemy sighted.

We all know that San Miguel chair Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. is the target. Obvious *ba*? They want to yank him out of the country's biggest . . . well, "private" business.

To get him, they simply kick up a storm against his moves in San Miguel. Case in point is the $540-million investment of Japan's biggest beverage firm Kirin Brewery.

Unfortunately for them, the strategy isn't working. Even their alleged bright boys at the PCGG already agreed with the "economics" of the deal. Hmm. Really now!

It is such a big deal that it even caught the attention of the world's financial centers. So what else is there to consider other than the economics of it?

Help me here, because all along I thought it is purely business. What is there to consider? The theology of it? The taxidermy of it? The plumbing in my toilet? What?

* * *

AT least in the stock market, according to reports, they think the investment is good for San Miguel and, therefore, all of its stockholders, including the government.

The Bangko Sentral also expects a $2.4-billion deficit in our international payments this year. That $540 million from Kirin should be a big help.

In boardrooms, moreover, they take note of the confidence which the investment brings to business. This country can still draw a serious investor like Kirin after all.

Even this cute administration seems to send us the economic message, as Gloriaetta creates a study group to look into the "effects" of the investment.

As head of the group, she chooses none other than Finance Secretary Jose Isidro "the Whiz" Camacho. Why the Whiz? Why not?

Correct me if I'm always right, but I don't think Gloriaetta wants to check the biology of it. By tradition, the finance secretary is the economic team captain.

* * *

CLEARLY, this cute administration wants the economics of it to prevail, if indeed in the Kirin investment, we must consider other things such as the color of my boxer shorts.

Usually level-headed, the Whiz now says, or rather asks, rhetorically, if we want to let the Kirin investments go, bearing in mind we don't get such a huge one every day.

Perhaps he is talking to the main figures behind this attack against the Kirin investments, whoever they are, since they come up with a different "concern" every day.

So now it has nothing to do with the economics of it. So now it has everything to do with this thing called "transparency." You know—like those see-through blouses.

All of a sudden, the Kirin deal lacks transparency. Some senators even want to sue some San Miguel directors because they don't rat on the deal to the PCGG. Hmm.

So does the PCGG have guidelines on ratting? What exactly, among countless things going on in a business, must its appointed directors rat on? Some secret beer formula?

* * *

BETWEEN you and me, I heard that O.V. Espiritu, former president of the former Far East Bank, does not want to sit in the San Miguel board anymore.

He's one of the original nominees of this cute administration to the board, who are supposed to replace the nominees of the man named Band . . . Wrist Band.

Well, maybe Espiritu does not want to get himself into all this mess in San Miguel. You can never tell what the politicos will think of next—in media, at that!

As it is, they can always invent some rules, impromptu, on what PCGG directors should eat for breakfast and things like that. You know—some moving targets.

For talking of transparency in a "private" business like San Miguel is like saying it's just another government agency. It cannot have secrets like any normal business.

Go ahead, and ask any businessman: Which would he be more likely do, reveal some hush-hush sensitive negotiations still under wraps, or have sex in full public view?

* * *

UNLESS the businessman fantasizes of becoming a porno star, I think you know the answer. Gosh, some companies even hide a lot of things from their banks.

Now they say San Miguel, a "private" business, should be as translucently bold as the then voluptuous and young Elizabeth Oropesa in "Pinakamagandang Hayop . . ."

But where was I? Anyway, it's clear what they want by what they say. As my Apong Oñing used to say, you catch a fish by its mouth—never, definitely not, by its feet.

They want to take over San Miguel. To them it should be just another government agency. Its board members, with the chair, must therefore be government functionaries.

It's the only way to boot Danding out of San Miguel. The government must take over the company. Or rather, retake over! Again! And then what?

Says a taipan: "I don't know Danding, but why do they want the government to take over the company, when we know how bad the government will run it?"

* * *

POLITICS, sir, it's all politics. Whoever is behind it all, is actually aiming for two targets. They are Danding and Gloriaetta. Obvious *ba*?

Talk has it that the two already forged an alliance of sort. For 2004, what else? Somebody must think that theirs is a formidable partnership.

It can give Gloriaetta an edge in the next presidential election. Somebody apparently doesn't like that, and the talk says this somebody is not even in the opposition.

In the recent senatorial elections, only three provinces delivered for Gloriaetta's slate the 13-0 result which everybody promised her.

Among them was Negros. This, as everybody knows, is Danding country. Like or not, Danding still has political clout. Gloriaetta figures she will need it.

Even if she is slighted by it, she is really considered a stranger in her own party, the ruling Lakas, much like an enemy within. How do you govern and lead that way?

Philex Gold sells 10% stake in mining project for $20M

By Doris C. Dumlao

PHILEX Gold Inc., the gold mining unit of publicly listed Philex Mining Corp., is selling a 10-percent stake in the Bolongan copper-gold mining project in Surigao del Norte to joint venture partner Anglo-American Exploration (Phils) B.V. for $20 million.

Philex Gold vice president for finance Paula Kember yesterday disclosed to the Philippine Stock Exchange that proceeds from the transaction would be used to repay $14 million of the company's debts and fund obligations from the closure of its Bulawan mine.

The stake in the Bolongan copper-gold deposit, discovered in August 2000, is held by Silangan Mindanao Mining Co. Inc., the joint venture between Philex Gold and Anglo. Drilling in the area is still ongoing.

"It is anticipated that the transaction will close early in 2002, at which point Philex Gold's equity in the Boyongan deposit will be reduced to 50 percent," Kember said.

The $20-million purchase price for a 10-percent stake is based on the valuation of more than 3 US cents per pound of copper equivalent on the basis of the current estimate of the metal content of the deposit as official mineral resources have yet to be determined at this time.

But the agreement noted that additional payments of up to $5 million for the stake might be made on the basis of an increase in the metal content of the deposit or from any other discovery within the surrounding tenements, which will be determined by feasibility studies.

LOCAL miner at work

Should Anglo be able to expand the project after a feasibility study at its own expense, the agreement provided that it would be entitled to an additional 30-percent equity either directly or through a joint venture with another group.

In such a situation, Philex Gold will be required to raise its pro-rata share of the project funding while Anglo would provide 100 percent of the completion guarantees that might be required by third party lenders.

Philex Gold said it continued to be optimistic on the drilling results from the deposit and by the expanded exploration program for next year. It said the joint venture was planning about 15,000 meters of resource definition drilling and 3,000 meters of scout drilling for 2002 using four high capacity and one to two medium capacity diamond drill rigs.

For his part, Philex Gold chair and CEO Gerard Brimo said: "The situation at the Bulawan mine makes it important for us to raise the necessary funds to pay our liabilities and move ahead."

"The terms of the agreement are reasonable given the early stage of the exploration and project definition, while our currently low share price precludes other acceptable alternatives."

Philex Gold's parent company, Philex Mining, is listed both on the Philippine Stock Exchange and the Canadian Ventures Exchange.

Equitable PCI Bank settles BSP obligation

By Elena R. Torrijos

AFTER 11 months, Equitable PCI Bank effectively graduated from the financial assistance program of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas after the bank yesterday paid in full the remaining balance of the P30-billion emergency loan it secured from the monetary authority in January this year.

Equitable PCI Bank said in a statement that it extinguished its entire debt when it remitted P2 billion to the BSP yesterday afternoon.

Last November, then Equitable PCI Bank chair George Go was linked to the impeachment case against former President Joseph Estrada late last year. As a result, the bank suffered from massive withdrawals and was forced to apply for a short-term financial emergency package for the BSP to ease the liquidity crunch.

The P30-billion loan gave BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura leverage to prod the Go family, majority shareholders of Equitable PCI Bank, to change the management of the bank and appoint Citibank colleague and veteran banker Deogracias Vistan as president in May.

With the return of depositors following an aggressive deposit recovery program, Equitable PCI Bank has been gradually paying its emergency loan over the past several months.

Buenaventura said: "We comment the swiftness with which Equitable PCI Bank was able to repay in full the Bangko Sentral. With the full repayment of its loan, we expect Equitable PCI Bank to reestablish its dominant position as one of the top-tier banks in the country."

In an interview last month, Vistan said that Equitable PCI Bank would accelerate the payment of its remaining debt if the BSP cut the liquidity reserve requirement.

Early this month, the regulator reduced its liquidity reserve requirement by two percentage points, freeing up billions of pesos of bank funds that could spur economic activity.

Equitable PCI, currently the fourth biggest lender in the country, is largely owned by the Go family, and state-controlled pension funds Social Security System and the Government Service Insurance System.

WG&A plans to hike capital

SHIPPING firm William, Gothong & Aboitiz Inc. is planning to raise fresh funds to strengthen operations by increasing its public ownership either through divestment or issuance of new shares.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, WG&A said, however, that the plans were still being firmed up.

To date, WG&A has 5.277 billion outstanding shares of which 85.36 percent is controlled by the principal shareholders of William Lines Inc., Aboitiz Shipping Corp. and Carlos A. Gothong Lines (which merged in 1995 to form the company).

At the same time, WG&A said it had issued 40 million new shares to Aboitiz & Co. as a form of compensation for providing key executives from the Aboitiz group who took over the management of the merged shipping line in May 1999.

"As can be seen in WG&A's financial results, there was a turnaround in the company's performance starting 1999 when the new management came in. It shall be management's goal to further improve and sustain profits and cash flow, thereby resulting to higher shareholder value," the disclosure said.

The Aboitiz group will subscribe to the shares over the next five years at P2 per share, or for a total of P80 million.

The P20-million initial proceeds from the subscription, representing 25 percent of the issued shares, have now been used by WG&A for additional working capital.

WG&A said the premium between the prospectively higher market price and the P2 per share subscription price set for Aboitiz represented the compensation given to the latter upon the sale of these shares. It noted that Aboitiz was planning to sell the shares within the next five years.

At the time the subscription was approved, WG&A shares were trading at a market price of about P1.32.

The amount of shares issued to WG&A was equivalent to the amount of shares that the company earlier agreed to buy back from the market, thus averting any significant dilution of the shares held by other stockholders.

WG&A also earlier announced plans to convert a portion of its common shares into redeemable preferred shares in order to give stockholders more value for their holdings since it would provide liquidity for their investments.

Under the scheme, the stockholders were given the option to redeem their investments within a given period at a premium, in order to encourage a more active trading of its shares.

WGA was also planning to wipe out its deficit of P647 million as of end-2000 using an additional paid-in surplus of P3.9 billion.

William Lines started operations in 1949 and was listed on the PSE in 1995 as WG&A after the three-way merger. It now provides the biggest inter-island passenger transport and cargo liner services in containers or breakbulk through a network of more than 30 ports across the Philippines.

WG&A has a wide geographic reach, with full branches in Manila, Cebu, Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro, Davao and General Santos.

During the last few years, the company has been adversely affected by lower freight revenues and higher costs from the write-off of insurance receivables, contractual repairs and operations claims.

Disclosures

FIL-HISPANO Holdings Corp. finalized the sale of its 13,592-square-meter property in Valenzuela to **Puregold Properties Inc.**

* * *

PRIME Gaming Philippines Inc. announced the resignation of Dexter Almarines as director of the company.

* * *

DANTE Ramos resigned as corporate secretary of **Filinvest Land Inc.** and **Filinvest Development Corp.**

* * *

THE BOARD of **Equitable PCI Bank** approved the appointment of Teresita Alegre and Ma. Luz Generoso as directors of the bank.

* * *

THE BOARD of **PCI Leasing and Finance Inc.** accepted the resignation of Horacio Templo as director of the company.

* * *

MUSIC Corp. announced the resignation of Bartholomeus van Hedel as director of the company.

* * *

METROPOLITAN Bank and Trust Co. increased its number of directors from 11 to 15. The par value of its common shares was reduced from P100 to P20 each and the number of its common shares was increased from 500 million to 2.5 billion.

* * *

TRADING of **Boulevard Holdings Inc.'s** shares was suspended yesterday after it failed to comply with the Philippine Stock Exchange's reportorial requirements. ***Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

Philippine Stock Exchange

(As of Wednesday, December 19, 2001)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Bank of the Phil. Islands	57	57.5	57	57	527,300
China Banking Corp.	570	570	570	570	1,720
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	22.5	22.75	22.5	22.5	309,000
Global Business Bank Inc	85	85	85	85	200
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	178	181	178	180	71,230
Philippine National Bank	59	60	59	60	176,500
Security Bank Corp.	15	15.75	15	15.75	3,900
Union Bank of the Phil.	14.75	14.75	14.5	14.75	90,000
FINANCIAL SERVICE					
Bankard Inc.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	5,000
Filipino Fund Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	50,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1350	1350	1350	1350	1,540
Sun Life Financial Serv.	1105	1105	1090	1090	5,580
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	22.75	22.75	22	22.5	688,000
Diversified Fin. Network	6	6	6	6	1,000
Digital Telecom Phils. Inc.	0.38	0.4	0.38	0.4	60,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	580	585	580	585	11,420
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.028	0.029	0.028	0.029	1,000,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.47	0.47	0.46	0.46	60,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	3	3.45	3	3.45	54,000
Piltel	0.32	0.35	0.32	0.35	510,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	412.5	420	412.5	415	74,720
Ivantage Corp.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	40,000
Philweb.Com Inc.	0.019	0.019	0.018	0.019	25,200,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	23	23.25	23	23.25	2,200
Manila Electric Co. B	30.5	30.5	30	30	367,100
Petron Corp.	1.5	1.54	1.48	1.52	4,754,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	30,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	1.98	2	1.98	1.98	1,117,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	100,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26	10,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	28,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	12	12	12	12	53,600
La Tondeña Distillers Inc.	23	23.5	23	23	7,189,400
Pure Foods Corp. A	77	77	77	77	200
RFM Corp.	2.24	2.26	2.22	2.22	3,600,000
San Miguel Corp. A	43	43	42.5	42.5	738,400
San Miguel Corp. B	53.5	54	53	53.5	749,600
Vitarich Corp.	0.4	0.4	0.38	0.38	200,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.63	0.67	0.63	0.67	450,000
Ayala Corp.	4.7	4.75	4.7	4.75	1,467,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	1.48	1.54	1.48	1.52	278,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.7	0.71	0.7	0.7	460,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	310,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	114,000,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.68	0.68	0.62	0.62	18,320,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	30,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.19	0.2	0.19	0.2	110,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	100,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	280,000
Ebecom Holdings Inc.	0.085	0.085	0.0825	0.0825	600,000
First Phil Hldgs. Corp.	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	801,600
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	100,000
House of Investments Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	40,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.54	1.54	1.54	1.54	220,000
Macroasia Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	50,000
Megaworld Corp.	0.73	0.73	0.7	0.71	910,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.32	0.33	0.31	0.32	3,150,000
Music Corp.	0.36	0.36	0.33	0.33	6,400,000
Philtread Holdings Corp.	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	10,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	120,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	2,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co.	0.038	0.038	0.038	0.038	100,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	190,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
SPI Technologies Inc.	13	13.5	13	13.5	84,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICE					
Belle Corp.	0.46	0.47	0.45	0.47	2,080,000
Manila Jockey Club	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5	50,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	100,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	22.5	22.5	21.75	22	2,855,900
Equitable PCI Bank-War	1.6	1.62	1.56	1.58	196,000
Globe Telecom Hldg. (Pdr)	570	570	570	570	9,000
Omico Corp. Warrant	0.0012	0.0012	0.0012	0.0012	60,000,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10	10	10	10	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10	10	10	10	2,000
Philweb.Com Inc.-Warrants	0.0055	0.0055	0.005	0.0055	143,000,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	4.8	4.8	4.75	4.8	4,659,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	70,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.34	1,560,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	10,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.72	1.84	1.72	1.82	4,799,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.2	0.22	0.2	0.22	460,000
SM Development Corp.	0.86	0.86	0.85	0.85	120,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.1	6.1	6	6	6,210,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	20,000
Itogon-Suyoc Mines A	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	1,600,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	200,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.0038	0.0038	0.0038	0.0038	44,000,000
Polar Mines & Dev't Corp.	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	3,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	200,000
OIL					
Interport Res.	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	1,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	1,000,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.2	0.21	0.2	0.21	230,000

	SHARES	VALUE (P)
Banks & Fin Svc	1,241,970	71,211,785.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	403,515,140	438,536,775.00
PRO	17,888,000	69,558,600.00
Mining	49,020,000	337,000.00
OIL	2,230,000	54,200.00
GRAND TOTALS:	473,900,110	579,713,360.00

AVERAGES		
Banks & Fin Svc	472.07	UP 3.41
Comm'l & Ind'l	1,547.44	UP 7.57
PRO	489.84	DOWN 3.15
Mining	1,024.24	UP 3.94
OIL	1.91	DOWN 0.01
All Shares Index	695.14	UP 7.10
Composite	1,129.41	UP 5.01

NO. OF ADVANCES: 33; NO. OF DECLINES: 20; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 39; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 92; NO. OF TRADES: 2,080

Currencies

Dec. 19, 2001 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Foreign currency in US$	Foreign currency in Peso
United States	Dollar	1.106929	1.000000	51.8200
Japan	Yen	0.008668	0.007831	0.4058
United Kingdom	Pound	1.613239	1.457400	75.5225
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.141928	0.128218	6.6443
Switzerland	Franc	0.677933	0.612445	31.7369
Canada	Dollar	0.703527	0.635566	32.9350
Singapore	Dollar	0.603396	0.545108	28.2475
Australia	Dollar	0.571466	0.516262	26.7527
Bahrain	Dinar	2.936308	2.652661	137.4609
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.295174	0.266660	13.8183
Brunei	Dollar	0.601103	0.543036	28.1401
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000110	0.000099	0.0051
Thailand	Baht	0.025272	0.022831	1.1831
UAE	Dirham	0.301451	0.272331	14.1122
Korea	Won	0.000863	0.000780	0.0404
Euro	Euro	1.000000	0.903400	46.8142
Germany	Mark	0.511292	0.461901	23.9357
France	Franc	0.152450	0.137722	7.1368
Netherlands	Guilder	0.453780	0.409945	21.2433
Austria	Schilling	0.072673	0.065653	3.4021
Belgium	Franc	0.024790	0.022395	1.1605
Italy	Lire	0.000517	0.000467	0.0242
Finland	Markka	0.168188	0.151941	7.8736
Portugal	Escudo	0.004988	0.004506	0.2335
Spain	Peseta	0.006011	0.00543	0.2814
Luxemburg	Franc	0.024790	0.022395	1.1605
Ireland	Punt	1.269738	1.147081	59.4417

BSP sees December inflation at 4% to 4.2 %

By CLARISSA S. BATINO

LOWER fuel prices, a stable exchange rate and a better farm output are expected to further push down the inflation rate for December to a range of 4 to 4.2 percent from the previous month's 4.4 percent, according to Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura.

Even with the expected decline in the inflation rate, the policy-making Monetary Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday decided to keep its overnight rates unchanged at 7.75 percent for borrowing and 10 percent for lending after cutting the rates for two consecutive weeks.

"We see no reason to change (the rates) since the markets are stable given the sufficient liquidity in the system," said the central bank chief who also chairs the Monetary Board.

"Even our budget deficit target appears to be in the bag already and this should help keep the inflation rate low," said the BSP governor.

Buenaventura noted that the policy rates were now down to their lowest levels since Sept. 1, 1995.

Monetary authorities have started bringing down the BSP policy rates in December last year. The rates have since been slashed by 7.25 percentage points.

Buenaventura said the Monetary Board was planning to maintain a low interest rates regime next year to help boost the Philippine economy particularly in the first half when it was expected to remain weak.

The economy is expected to start recovering in the second half in view of the project rise in export receipts to be brought about by the projected rebound in the US economy.

Buenaventura said the banking system had opted to keep the excess liquidity worth about P26 billion that had been brought back into the system following the recent two-percentage-point cut in the banks' reserve requirement.

The funds freed were mainly in the form of government securities which the banks opted to keep rather than converting them into cash, Buenaventura said.

As a result, the yield of the benchmark 91-day treasury bill went up by 8.6 basis points to 8.873 percent in last Monday's auction while the rates on longer-term treasuries would have gone up by 61.5 points and 93.8 points had the government accepted the bids.

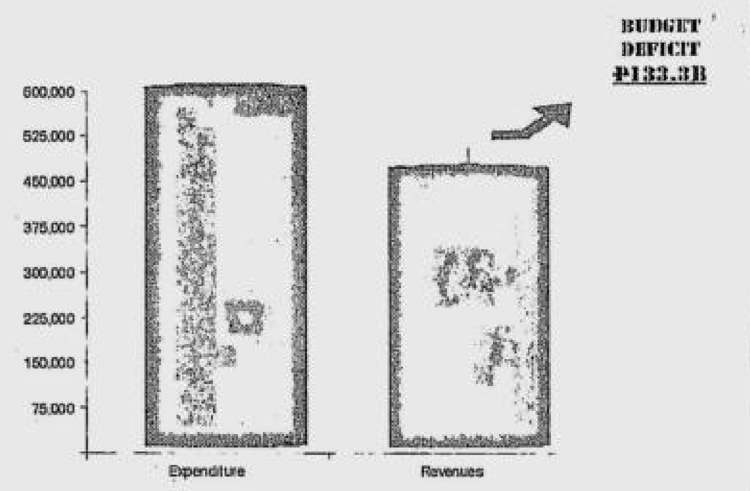
Next year, the central bank chief believed that the Philippine economy would post better numbers in the fiscal and monetary fronts with the prospects of lower interest rates, lower inflation, lower budget deficit and higher growth in gross domestic product.

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

Government revenue vs expense

(January to October 2001, in million pesos)



Source: Bureau of Treasury

DURING the first 10 months of the year, government expenditure was P5.9 billion lower than the projected level for the period of P598.2 billion. Despite this, there was still a deficit of P133.3 billion as revenues fell short of expectations. The government targetted a whole year deficit of P145 billion.

Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research

Retail sales to decline by 10%

By GIL C. CABACUNGAN JR.

RETAIL sales are expected to fall by as much as 10 percent this year as the merchants' gambit of sacrificing margins to bring down prices failed to perk up consumer demand.

Former Philippine Retailers Association president Samie Lim said the usual Christmas rush started late this year as demand picked up only in the first week of December largely due to lack of consumer confidence.

Lim said sales in November were "very bad" as they were down 20 percent from last year's level. Retailers were able to partly offset this slump in December when sales rose 10 percent from last year's level.

"(Sales of) consumer durables are down. Sales of food and clothing are up. Most people are buying cheaper items as the gloomy economic conditions force them to be more cost conscious and to buy only what they need," said Lim who runs the Automatic Center and Sogo chain.

Overall, Lim said the retail industry was to suffer a 5 percent to 10-percent drop in this year's sales even though merchants had trimmed down their profit margins from 10 percent to only 7 to 8 percent.

This only shows that the real problem of the industry is the lack of consumer confidence rather than affordability, he said.

"It's the best time to buy goods this season with all the great bargains. But most consumers are wary of spending now in view of the gloomy economic outlook," Lim said.

Lim, however, remained confident that consumer demand would rebound by the second or third quarter next year. "People can't postpone their purchases much longer, they are bound to open their checkbooks sooner or later. How soon this would be depends on when will the consumers regain their confidence in the economy," Lim said.

P6.05-B DEBT TO SGS

Gov't seeks soft repayment terms

THE MACAPAGAL administration has asked Swiss import inspector Societe Generale de Surveillance for softer payment terms for the government's obligations with the company amounting to P6.05 billion.

The government wants to pay the amount in installments over a period of several years.

Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said budget constraints have restricted the government from settling the full amount in one payment.

"We are negotiating with SGS to spread the payment period over several years considering the tight budgetary condition of the national government," said the finance secretary.

The Swiss import inspection firm initially billed the Philippine government about P6.48 billion (or 206,150,238.14 Swiss francs) for services rendered from September 1998 to March 2000.

After reviewing the amount, however, the task force formed to validate the claims of SGS concluded that the bill should only be P6.05 billion.

The task force had recommended that P117.5 million be deducted from the SGS bill and that P314 million in charges be reviewed further.

SGS, according to the finance department, is willing to forego the P314 million provided that an agreement would be forged on the terms of payment for the rest of the obligations.

"To stress the national government's intention to settle its contractual obligations, the DoF has accepted the final report of the task force and is now directing the team to settle the liability. But the settlement is subject to applicable laws including the annual appropriation of Congress," said Camacho.

The finance department had included in the government's unprogrammed funds for next year a budget of P3 billion for the initial payment to SGS.

The government earlier said it would not hire another pre-shipment import inspector but it might tap a third party to update the Bureau of Custom's import valuation database. It plans to bid out the contract .

An updated valuation database will help the BoC to arrest technical smuggling in the form of misdeclaration of the products imported or under-declaration of the import values.

Hiring a third party to update the BoC data base was estimated to cost the government only 30 percent of the fees charged for pre-shipment import inspection services.

Clarissa S. Batino

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LGUs to be tapped for distribution of drugs from India

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade Industry, through the Philippine International Trading Corp., will tap local government units for the distribution and sale of cheaper drugs from India in line with its campaign to bring down the prices of medicines in the country.

In a letter to Cebu City Mayor Tomas R. Osmeña, PITC president Arthur C. Yap assured LGUs that the government's Presyong Tama program was meant to facilitate and not hinder purchases of essential medicines most needed by the LGUs' constituency.

The LGUs have earlier expressed concern that the Presyong Tama program would centralize their procurement of medicine through the DTI or PITC and "result in a labyrinthine paper chase process that is prejudicial to the interest of the transacting public." Yap stressed that the program was meant as a mere option for consideration.

PITC has been issued by the Bureau of Food and Drugs a license to operate as a drugs importer and distributor. It also got from BFAD certificates of product registration (CPR) for various medicines.

Yap also cited the advantages of buying their medicine from the LGUs particularly the guarantee of competitive pricing because PITC's role in the process would eliminate unnecessary middlemen and various distribution and facilitation charges.

He said the LGUs did not have to go through the bidding process because they were allowed to enter into negotiated contracts for the procurement of drugs if the supplier was a government agency. The PITC also assures quality, timely delivery and warehousing and delivery services.

The LGUs are the next target of the DTI-PITC after penetrating government hospitals as distribution centers for the Indian drugs. The DTI has already made four shipments since it first brought in the Indian drugs into the country last year and all of its shipments were sold only through government hospitals.

In one of its shipments, the DTI claimed that its cargo worth P25.8 million, if sold at Mercury Drug outlets would have cost a total of P66.78 million based on prevailing prices. With the drugs from India, the DTI said, consumers pay only 38 percent of the local retail outlets' prevailing prices.

The DTI's parallel drug importation, which started last year, has been intensified, albeit inconspicuously, despite the pending case filed by the Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association which claimed that the move was illegal because it violated their exclusive distribution contract in the country.

Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

Import slump . . .

(From page B1)

"This brings the year-to-date trade surplus to $1.5 billion, which should help preserve (foreign exchange) reserves," said Charlie Lay, an analyst at 4cast Ltd. in Singapore.

Stable foreign exchange reserves supporting the peso would benefit Philippine corporations, many of which are staggering under the weight of dollar-denominated debt, Lacson said.

The government benefits from a stable peso too, because 57.4 percent of the national debt was held in US dollars by the end of September.

But Lay added: "Despite coming off a lower base last year, the (October imports) contraction was more severe (than in September), indicating the continued slowdown in domestic demand."

Electronics and components were the largest import in October, accounting for 15.3 percent of the total while telecommunications equipment and electrical machinery were second at 11.4 percent.

Japan was the largest source of Philippine imports, accounting for 21.5 percent of the total but imports from that country still fell by 4.8 percent to $510.5 million compared to last year.

The United States was second largest source of imports, accounting for 14.8 percent of the total. *With Inquirer wire reports*

Shares . . .

(From page B1)

ing their investment portfolios before the year draws to an end.

To some extent, Wall Street's gains Tuesday, in particular the rise in PLDT's American Depositary Receipts in New York, helped lift local stock prices, said Yap.

Tuesday, the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 1.1 percent, while the Nasdaq Composite Index gained 0.9 percent.

"I wouldn't read too much in the market's movement in the next few trading days, since it's almost the end of the year and investors are closing their books," said Yap.

The long Christmas break may also discourage some investors from maintaining a long position in the market, choosing instead to stay liquid during the holiday, said Yap.

Financial markets will be closed on Dec. 24, 25, 31 and Jan. 1.

AP

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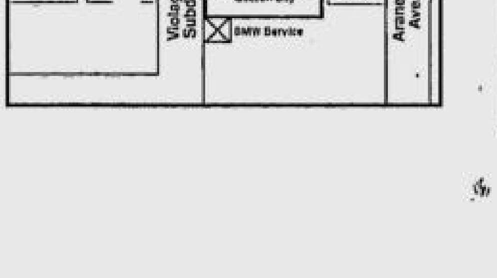

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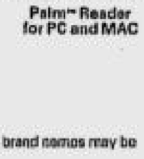
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Petroleum price cuts seen next week

By Ronnel W. Domingo

INDUSTRIALIST Raul Concepcion disclosed yesterday that consumers should expect another round of fuel price cuts on Monday, saying the country's oil companies were still short of implementing a roll back of 84 centavos a liter.

Concepcion, who chairs the private sector Consumer and Oil Price Watch, said effecting the price reduction due for December would be a good Christmas treat for the public.

"Oil companies still owe consumers 17 centavos due in November (since the last price cut was only 30 centavos)," he told reporters.

He said a further 67-centavos-a-liter rollback was due this month as average crude prices in November were lower than their October levels by $1.96 while the peso appreciated by 23 centavos within those months.

Crude prices stood at an average $17.67 a barrel in November compared with $19.63 in October.

On the other hand, the peso went up from 51.76 to a dollar in October to 51.99 in November.

"If the oil firms would not implement the roll back for December, then maybe they could use it as a buffer for any price increase that can occur in January," Concepcion said.

This means that if oil prices follow the trend of going up at the start of the year, local prices should be stable because of the buffer.

Also, Concepcion said Unioil Petroleum Philippines Inc.'s 70-centavo price cut showed that the oil firms could actually effect larger price cuts.

"Unioil was able to do this because it had a smaller inventory," he said. "Other new players, especially Total (TotalFinaElf Philippines Inc.), should be encouraged to do the same."

Total is the largest of the new industry players with at least a hundred stations nationwide.

New player Unioil on Tuesday slashed its gasoline prices by 70 centavos a liter, diesel by 50 centavos and kerosene by 30 centavos.

The other oil companies reduced prices by only 30 centavos a liter apart from that of liquefied petroleum gas by P1 a kilo.

The price cuts were the 11th within the year and the 6th since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks against the United States.

Napocor chief says ₱470-M plunder raps part of smear job

By Ronnel W. Domingo

BELEAGUERED National Power Corp. president Jesus Alcordo said on Tuesday that the group that filed plunder charges against him was "fictitious," and that everything was part of a smear campaign against him.

"I have talked to the heads of all the unions of Napocor employees, and they said there was no such group as the Crusaders Against Graft and Corruption (in Napocor)," Alcordo said in an interview.

He disclosed that the spokesperson of the group, a certain Maharlika Cruzado de Verguenza, was not a Napocor employee.

Alcordo provided the INQUIRER an unsigned copy of the group's letter to Ombudsman Aniano Desierto dated Oct. 24, 2001 with De Verguenza as the source.

The group, which said it would "soon be affiliated with the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption," accused Alcordo of plundering Napocor's coffers of P470 million.

In October, an anonymous source told the INQUIRER that "congressmen received between P2.5 million and P5 million during the last few days when the passage of the (then) power bill was being pushed (from late May to early June this year)."

Alcordo also provided a copy of the same letter stamped as received by the Office of the Ombudsman, this time dated Nov. 5 and signed by a certain lawyer, Cesar Jimenea Jr.

Alcordo maintained that the release of the fund was done in a transparent manner.

He said the P470 million were part of Napocor's funding commitment to the government's rural electrification program.

"The Department of Energy was trying to achieve total electrification of all the barangays as fast as possible and this was our part in that effort," Alcordo said. *Ronnel W. Domingo*

Gov't to keep deficit at ₱100B sans Pagcor's ₱18-B borrowing

By Clarissa S. Batino

EVEN with the postponement of the P18-billion borrowing of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. that would have added some P10 billion into the government's coffers, the Macapagal administration is confident it can keep its budget deficit at P145 billion or even lower this year.

"The Pagcor deal is not going to be completed anymore this year but we still expect to meet our deficit target," Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said.

Pagcor has moved to the first two months of next year its plan to borrow some P18 billion from the National Development Corp.

The NDC, the trade department's investment arm, is planning to issue about P18 billion worth of bonds that it will re-lend to Pagcor. Pagcor will, in turn, use the money to buy 60 hectares of commercial properties from the Public Estates Authority for its "Entertainment City," a $15-billion complex billed as Las Vegas and Disneyland rolled into one. The PEA will then remit part of its revenues from the sale to the national government as dividends.

"The Pagcor borrowing is still in the pipeline. We could use that to help finance next year's P130-billion deficit," Camacho said.

Pagcor said the planned borrowing from the NDC was preferable because it would be cheaper than directly issuing bonds. An official of the state-run firm said borrowing from the NDC would mean 4 percent less on interest charges.

Trade Secretary Manuel Roxas II said the NDC could earn some P170 million in fees if it would handle the financing for Pagcor.

Camacho said as of November, the budget deficit probably exceeded P145 billion, but a revenue surplus this month should pull it down to within the government's target. As of October, the deficit had ballooned to P133.319 billion.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said the government should post a surplus of about P6 billion by the end of the month that should wipe out part of the 11-month deficit.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue has reported that it has exceeded its collection target as of end-November by P3.3 billion, wiping out its shortfall of P2.933 billion in October.

BIR Commissioner Rene Bañez said as of November, the BIR had already registered a collection surplus of P570 million.

Trium says 20% of income to come from RP operations

By Abigail L. Ho

HANDSET manufacturer Trium Telecom Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd. expects 20 percent of its $50-million projected regional revenues next fiscal year to come from the Philippines, to be generated from the sale of at least 500,000 handsets.

Trium managing director Norio Miyazawa said in a news briefing yesterday that the Philippines was one of their larger markets because of the wireless boom the country had experienced these past few years.

"The Philippines is one of the most important countries for us. It's still booming because text messaging is very popular here," he said.

He added that the 20-percent projected Philippine contribution of $10 million could even reach $20 million should the economy pick up.

A "minimal investment" was made to set up its Philippine headquarters, Miyazawa said, but additional investments were still in the offing.

"There'll be an investment program coming soon, but this is still dependent on the demand. We'll be setting up a business center for near-to-market availability of units and services," he said.

Trium started selling its entry-level phones, Mars and Neptune, through cellular giants Smart Communications Inc. and Globe Telecom Inc. almost two months ago.

Even though the handsets had already been in the market for a couple of months, Trium Philippines country representative Meredith Lazaro said the company had already sold "quite a number" of handsets and that they had run out of stock in many distribution outlets.

He added that the company's two handset models had been "selling like hotcakes" despite the tough competition they had been getting from dominant handset manufacturer Nokia and other mobile phone suppliers.

Miyazawa expressed confidence that Trium could still eat at the market share of the dominant handset suppliers in the country because of its unique designs and the good brand reputation of its parent firm, Mitsubishi Electric.

"We can get a good share of the market in the future. The Mitsubishi brand has a well-known image in Asia. Nokia is famous for mobile phones, but we're banking on a lot of other customers from our other product lines," he said.

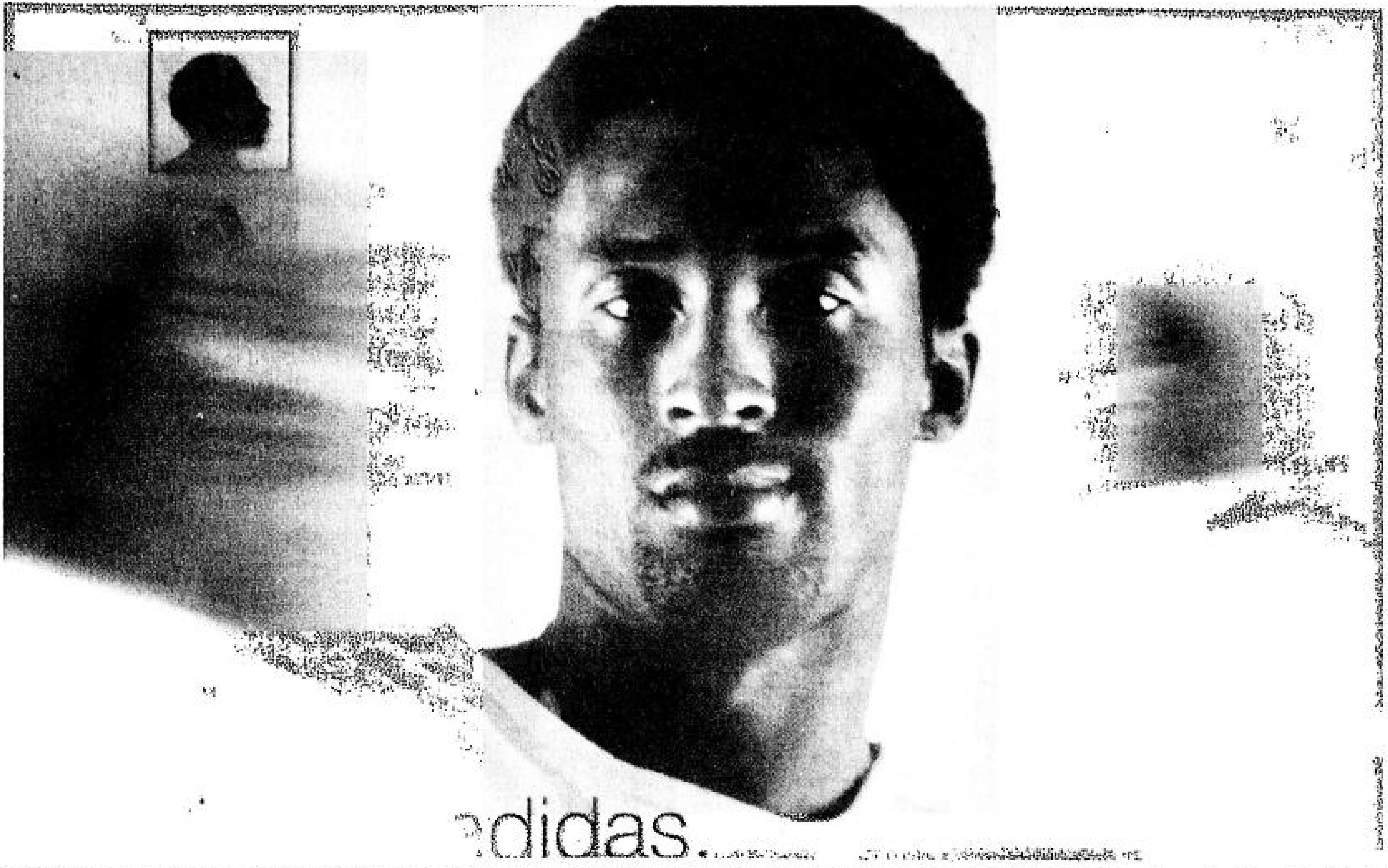
To further broaden its potential customer base, Lazaro said, Trium would also be talking to Gokongwei-owned Digital Telecommunications Philippines Inc. by the first quarter of next year.

"We have very good relationships with both operators (Globe and Smart), but we'll definitely talk to Digitel," he said.

The telecommunications firm is set to start commercial operations of its wireless service within the first three months of 2002.

BETTER TIMES AHEAD

Asia hopes to let the good times roll in 2002



PEOPLE walk past a street billboard advertisement of Adidas featuring Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant in Shanghai. China formally joined the World Trade Organization on Dec.11, ushering in an era of more choices for consumers, more opportunity for foreign investors and trying times for Chinese farms and factories. AP

SINGAPORE—Asian economies are set for better times in 2002 after months of plummeting exports left many showing their worst performance in years.

Still, analysts caution against being overly optimistic, saying Asia is not completely out of the woods yet.

Among the lurking sharks that may take a bite out of regional growth are China's emergence as a major economic force, a weaker yen and, above all, the possibility that a US recovery will fall flat on its face.

While analysts polled by Reuters disagree on the impact of the first two factors, most voice the opinion that if the predicted rebound in the United States—Asia's best consumer—fails to materialize in the second half of next year, then Asia will have to brace itself for more tough times.

"How fast Asia snaps back really depends on how fast the US snaps back," Graham Parry, regional economist at Lehman Brothers in Tokyo, said.

The poll showed the two economies that were most closed—China and India—were expected to clock in the most impressive rates of growth in 2002 of 7.2 percent and 5.9 percent, respectively.

How open or closed an economy is has emerged as an important factor in determining how well a country steered through the economic storm this year.

But the poll showed there was hope for the region's more open economies, those hit hardest by the global downturn and drop-off in external demand. Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong, all of which were seen as facing full-year contractions this year, were expected to be back in the black next year.

Countries that coped better this year with the global downturn were able to draw on the strength of their domestic economies, and analysts say that will remain a theme next year.

South Korea, for instance, exceeded expectations despite its reliance on the export-focused electronics sector because of the strength of its domestic economy. The poll forecast 4.2-percent growth next year.

Still, analysts emphasize that a meaningful recovery in Korea and elsewhere in the region still hinges on how well the United States does next year.

"Overall, these are highly open economies where the main engine of growth is exports, and you can't turn that around overnight," said Parry.

Other candidates seen posing downside risks to Asia's growth are China's entry into the World Trade Organization and the yen's recent rapid fall.

But some analysts say concerns over both factors are exaggerated.

Fears about China arise from the belief that the country, with its cheap labor costs, will rob foreign investment from the rest of Asia while pumping out much cheaper exports.

Deutsche Bank chief economist Michael Spencer said in a recent report such concerns bordered on "hysteria."

"Our analysis suggest that while India, Indonesia and the Philippines do stand to lose from China's membership in the global club of trading nations, the cumulative loss in GDP over the next five years will be 50 basis points or less. Other Asian economies will benefit."

Worries about the yen revolve around the idea that more falls in the Japanese currency could spur another round of competitive devaluations in the region.

But Steve Brice, head of economic research at Standard Chartered Bank in Singapore, debunked those concerns.

"Japan is becoming less important on a partly cyclical and structural basis due to the fact there's just very little growth coming out of Japan. So the yen's movements are becoming less relevant." *Reuters*

Motorola's harsh restructuring continues

CHICAGO—Motorola Inc. is getting significantly smaller—again—in pursuit of the profitability it maintains it will achieve again in 2002 after a 1-1/2-year losing streak.

The struggling technology giant, hamstrung since 2000 by a weakened economy and operating problems of its own making, is trimming another 9,400 jobs in the latest of a series of sweeping cuts.

The cell phone and semiconductor manufacturer said the most recent move Tuesday would improve its efficiency and, combined with semiconductor plant closings and other measures, result in about $1 billion in annual cost savings. But company executives also indicated they expected two more money-losing quarters after this one, making it six straight in the red, before an anticipated return to profitability in next year's third quarter.

The new shakeup further extends the third restructuring since 1998 for the Schaumburg, Illinois-based company, whose comeback efforts have been offset by troubles in the world economy.

The once-leading cell phone maker has posted small market-share gains in that slowed industry in recent months, with a slew of new phones helping it to slightly narrow the huge deficit with dominant Nokia. But industry experts remained skeptical about Motorola's latest claim that its recovery measures will soon pay off.

"Three years of restructuring, and now it looks like four," said analyst Brian Modoff of Deutsche Banc Alex Brown.

"In (cell phone) handsets they've made some improvement. But it's a technology conglomerate and there are a lot of things going on," he said. "They clearly have a lot more work ahead of them in a challenging and competitive environment."

The clearest sign of new obstacles on the path to recovery: The company said its first-quarter loss would be greater than expected, 11 to 14 cents.

Motorola's shares closed up 34 cents Wednesday at $16.61 on the New York Stock Exchange before the announcement. *AP*

Enron workers recount loss of life savings

WASHINGTON—As the stock price plummeted, current and retired employees of failed Enron Corp. helplessly watched their life savings dissolve because the company barred them from selling Enron shares from retirement accounts.

Their anger and sense of betrayal after years of loyal service to the energy-trading giant were displayed at a Senate hearing Tuesday at which several Enron employees testified.

"We have been lied to and we have been cheated," retiree Janice Farmer declared at the hearing by the Senate Commerce subcommittee on consumer affairs, held to examine one of the biggest corporate failures ever.

Farmer had nearly $700,000 in Enron stock and now faces living on a $63 monthly pension check. Charles Prestwood, who retired after 33-1/2 years in the natural gas business, mostly with Enron, lost nearly all his $1.3 million in savings.

The employees disputed Enron officials' assertion that they were locked out of their accounts for 10 business days this fall, saying it was much longer—increasing their losses.

"This is a tragedy for many, including the workers and investors who have been cheated out of billions of dollars," said Democratic Sen. Byron Dorgan of North Dakota, the subcommittee's chair.

With the company's stock having hemorrhaged more than $60 billion in value in recent months, Dorgan said, "Some at the top of the pyramid got rich and many at the bottom lost everything. It appears to me to be a combination of incompetence, greed, rampant speculation with investors' money and perhaps some criminal behavior."

Sen. Barbara Boxer, a California Democrat, was more blunt, telling reporters: "I personally hope some of these people wind up in jail." *AP*

Japan eases monetary policy, sees zero growth

TOKYO—The Bank of Japan stepped up its monetary policy easing on Wednesday, vowing to increase the already huge amount of funds it pumps into the banking system to prevent the economy from spiraling further into recession.

The decision was immediately followed by a government announcement that its official forecast for the next fiscal year starting on April 1 was for zero growth—dim, but still far more optimistic than projections by private-sector economists who expect a second straight year of economic contraction.

"Anticipation of further easing had been building up in the market over the past two days. I think the Bank of Japan had come under such pressure that they felt they had to do something," said Chotaro Morita, senior economist at Deutsche Securities in Tokyo.

"I think this decision has left the impression that there might be further action if conditions worsen even further between January and March next year."

The BOJ said its nine-member Policy Board decided to raise the target for its so-called quantitative easing policy and to increase purchases of Japanese government bonds (JGBs) to 800 billion yen ($6.25 billion) a month from 600 billion yen as a means to achieve that fund-injection objective.

The target—the balance of banks' current account deposits parked at the BOJ—was raised to 10 trillion to 15 trillion yen from "above 6 trillion yen." *Reuters*

Honda sets plan to focus on Asia as car parts hub

TOKYO—Japan's Honda Motor Co. has unveiled plans to make Asia a hub for car part production in 2002 as the automaker shifts operations abroad to cut costs and boost its global competitiveness.

"We have decided to make the Asian region a key supply station in our global supply network for parts," Hiroyuki Yoshino, president and chief executive, told a yearend news conference held by the No. 3 Japanese car firm.

"Taking our parts from Japan is expensive and to strengthen our cost competitiveness, we are looking to Asia," he said.

The company also formally announced it would begin importing small passenger cars to Japan from a plant in Thailand starting in 2003, marking the first time a Japanese automaker has imported cars for domestic sale.

The model has yet to be decided, said spokesperson koto Nagatsuyu, but it would differ from the four models currently produced there—the Accord, Civic, City and CR-V.

Plans were also going ahead to boost Honda's production in China to 120,000 units from 50,000 units by March 2003 at a cost of over 10 billion yen ($78 million).

The plant, which already rolls out Accord vehicles, will begin producing the Odyssey next spring. *AFP*

Toyota sees sales recovery at home

TOKYO—Japan's top automaker Toyota Motor Corp. said Wednesday domestic sales were forecast to recover in 2002 but production was expected to decline further amid a global economic slump.

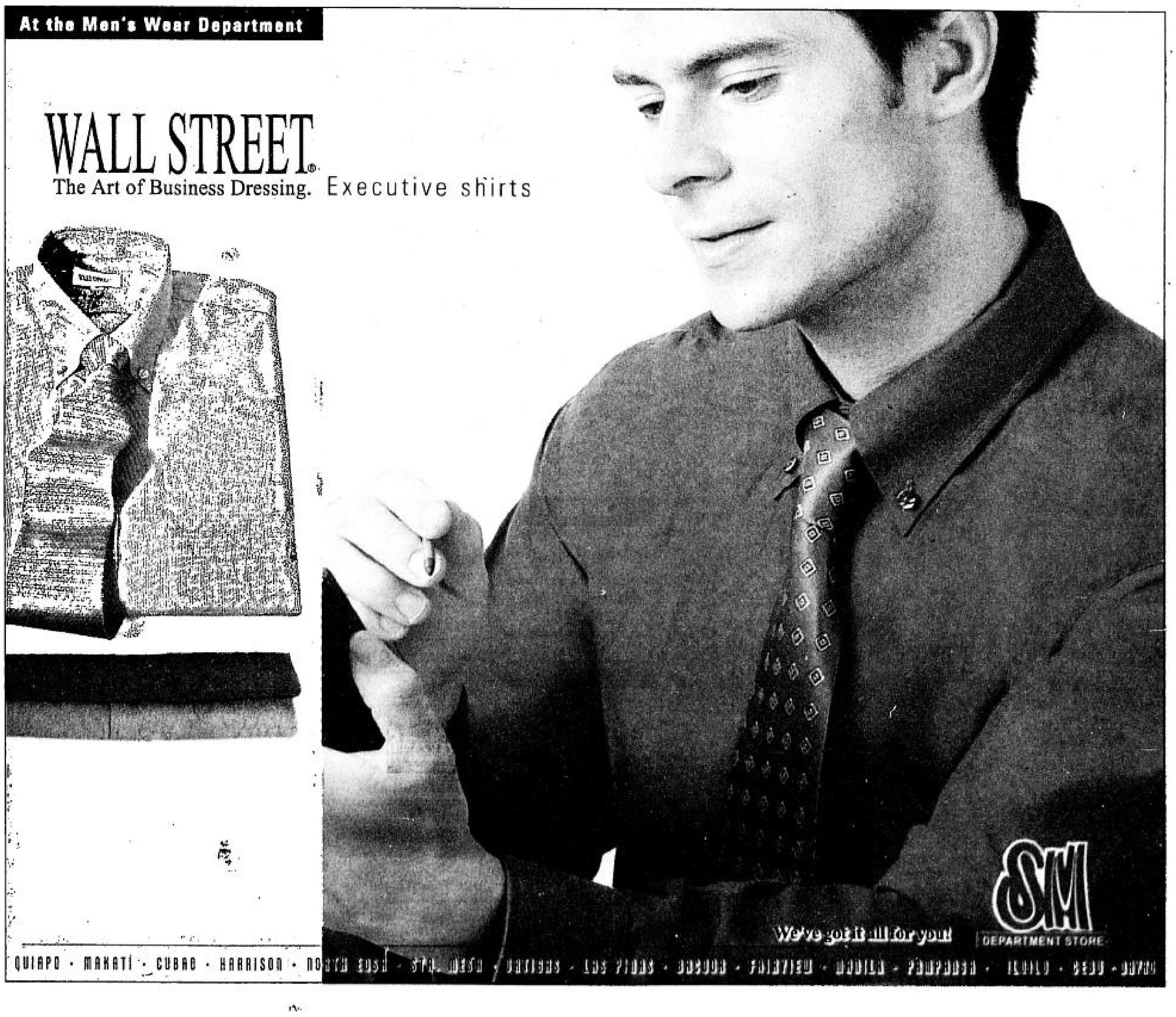
Toyota's sales at home are expected to reach 1.75 million vehicles in 2002, up 2 percent from this year. But domestic sales for 2001 would skid 3 percent to 1.72 million units, the company said in an annual outlook.

Production at home is seen sliding four percent next year to 3.2 million vehicles. Toshiba projected domestic production in the 12 months to December 2001 would fall 2 percent to 3.36 million autos.

Exports for 2002 are seen down 14 percent to 1.48 million units, compared with an expected three-percent decline to 1.66 million this year.

Toyota forecast both sales and production in other countries would continue to expand next year.

Overseas sales in 2002 are seen up one percent to 3.55 million units after an expected 4-percent gain this year to 3.51 million. *AFP*



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Interview will be on Dec. 20 & 21, 2001,
***** 2-4 p.m. *****
Tel. Nos. 8965484 & 8992052

MAT-LA 12857-2001 (AH1)
FCMC 8020/2001

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE
HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION
MATRIMONIAL CAUSES NO. 1435 OF 1999

Amended as in red pursuant to the Order made by His Honour Judge Saunders dated the 11th day of October 2001 this 18th day of October 2001.

AVILA, SUSANA T. (also known as SUSAN TOLENTINO) Petitioner
And
JOSE AVILA Respondent

AMENDED NOTICE

Registrar.

A Petition for divorce has been filed against Jose Avila of unknown address who may apply to the Family Court Registry at M2/F, Wanchai Law Courts, Wanchai Tower, No. 12 Harbour Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong for a copy of the Petition for Divorce. If within one month he has not communicated with the Family Court Registry, the Court may hear the case in his absence.

(PDI – Dec. 20, 2001) Registrar

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PREQUALIFICATION, BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION FOR PREQUALIFICATION/ELIGIBILITY

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) invites interested general building contractors currently accredited with the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for pre-qualification/eligibility and if later found eligible/qualified, to bid for the project described below:

Project Title	: Renovation and Extension of the Bangko Sentral Cotabato Branch (Phase 2)
Scope of Work	: Furnishing of all materials, labor, tools, equipment, technical supervision and other services and performing all testing and other operations necessary for the construction and completion of the project all in accordance with the requirements of the approved plans and specifications and subject to the terms and conditions of the Contract.
Project Location	: BSP - Cotabato Branch Sinsuat corner Quezon Avenue, Cotabato City
Approved Budget	: Pesos Twenty Million Five Hundred Seven Thousand Two Hundred Two and 26/100 (P20,507,202.26)
Source of Funding	: Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
Minimum Requirement (Criteria)	
PCAB License/IAC Classification	: IAC Category at least Medium (Building and Industrial Plant) for the past three (3) consecutive years
Contractor's Construction Experience in Similar Project	: Has completed in the past three (3) years at least three (3) construction/renovation projects of similar Architectural and Engineering (A&E) works one of which costs not less than Ten Million Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (P10,500,000.00) such as construction/renovation involving architectural (including finishing, plumbing, mechanical, and electrical works of commercial or institutional buildings requiring medium to high end finishes and good workmanship (projects may include offices, commercial centers, educational institutions, hotels and other of similar or greater complexity to the BSP's required project)
Credit Line/Cash Deposit Certificate Requirements	: Pesos Two Million Fifty Thousand (P 2,050,000.00)
Prequalification/Eligibility Statement Forms	
Cost of Forms	: Two Hundred Pesos per set (P200.00/set)
Date and Time of Issuance	: December 07 to 21, 2001, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 nn and 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Place of Issuance and Submission of Accomplished Eligibility/Statement Documents	: PBAC Secretariat, Room 204 (Tel. No. 524-7011 loc. 3143) Second Floor - Five Storey Building BSP Complex A. Mabini corner P. Ocampo (formerly V. Cruz) Streets, Manila
Deadline of Submission	: January 4, 2002, 4:00 PM
Notice of Eligibility/Ineligibility	
Date and Time of Issuance	: January 24, 2002. 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 nn and 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m
Place of Issuance	: PBAC Secretariat Room 204
Bid/Tender Documents	: Shall be issued only to eligible/prequalified contractors upon payment of the non-refundable cost of the documents
Cost of Documents/Place of Issuance	: Five Thousand Pesos per set (P5,000.00/set) PBAC Secretariat, Room 204
Date and Time of Issuance	: January 24 to 25, 2002, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 nn and 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m
Pre-bid Conference	
Date and Time	: February 4, 2002, 9:30 a.m.
Venue	: BMD Conference Room, Second Floor - Five Storey Building BSP Complex
Submission and Opening of Bids	
Deadline/Venue of Submission	: February 25, 2002, 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. PBAC Secretariat Room 204

Date, Time and Venue of Issuance of Bid Documents, Pre-Bid Conference and Deadline of Submission / Opening of Bids shall be confirmed in the Notice of Eligibility.

For inquiries, please call PBAC Secretariat - telephone no. 524-7011 local 3143.

Schedule for issuance of notice for eligibility/ineligibility up to deadline of submission of bids may be subject to change.

Guidelines stipulated in the provisions of PD1594 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations, as amended and other applicable rules and regulations shall apply relative to pre-qualification/eligibility, bidding, evaluation of bids and award of contract.

BSP reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any defect or formality therein, or accept such bid or award any part thereof to any contractor/s whose bid/s is/are evaluated to be most advantageous to BSP. Furthermore, BSP is not obligated to compensate/indemnify the contractor for any expenses or loss that may be incurred in the preparation of bids nor does it guarantee that an award of contract will be made.

(Sgd.) MARCOS J. SIONGCO JR.
Chairman

(PDI – Dec. 7, 15 & 20, 2001)

INQUIRER TRiViA

By BONG BARRAMEDA

Red eyes

Q. Why do the eyes sometimes show up red in a photograph?

A. If your eyes show up red in a photograph, it means that the angle of the light was just right to reflect from the retina at the back of the eye. The retina is red because it is full of blood vessels. It also means that the room was relatively dark, causing the pupils of your eyes to be open wide so that a significant amount of light could reach the retina and bounce back to the camera.

Ooops! Your blood is not always red. Actually, it is only red half the time and throughout half the body. Otherwise, it is usually a purplish blue. However, once the oxygen has been released throughout the body, blood picks up carbon dioxide and other wastes from the body's cells. It then takes on a purplish, almost blue color in the veins as it is returned to the heart. In fact, half the heart itself is colored purplish blue from the deoxygenated blood. But when you're cut, this blood from the veins immediately turns red when exposed to the oxygen in the air.

Name Game. **Ferris Wheel.** The Ferris wheel was named for George Washington Gale Ferris, the US civil engineer who built it for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Costing $385,000, the original wheel was 250 feet in diameter, capable of carrying over 2,000 passengers at one time in its 36 cars. Eighteen years later Ferris's famous structure that started a worldwide craze was sold for scrap, fetching less than $2,000.

WORD WATCH

Perya or **peryahan** : from the Spanish *feria*, 'fair, exposition.'

PDI – December 20, 2001

PUBLIC NOTICES

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE is given that the estate of the late **Candido G. Salvador** has been extrajudicially settled among his heirs as per Doc.#133, Page#27, Book#XVI Series of 2001 Not. Pub. Renato C Sta Teresa of Mktl. City (PDI-December 13, 20 & 27, 2001)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late BEATRIZ I. HAUTEA located at Brgy Kapitolyo, Pasig City has been extrajudicially settled by her heirs as per Doc. 394, Page. 79, Book 1, Series of 2001 by Notary Public Conrado E. Panlague Jr. for Quezon City. (PDI-Dec-13, 20 & 27, 2001)

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"Eternal life will swallow up that which can die. God made us for this very reason and He has given us the Spirit as a guarantee that we will live again."
2 Cor. 5:4-5

NEDALUZ GUMTANG-CASTILLO, D.M.D.

Davao City

Peacefully joined her Creator
on December 16, 2001 at the age of 38.

Her bereaved husband **Edgardo**; children **Clarence Fitzgerald** and **John Paolo**; father **Melencio A. Gumtang**; sisters **Glenna, Cristina, Rowena & Doreen**; brother **Larry**; and **Auntie Maring**; in-law, nephews, nieces and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the family residence at 7 Gen. Lao St., Toril, Davao City.

Interment will be on December 21, 2001 at the Davao Memorial Park after the 8:00 a.m. Holy Mass at Santo Rosario Church, Toril, Davao City.

ATTY. CATALINO RAMIREZ SANCHEZ

Died in the Grace of our Lord on December 15, 2001
at the age of 84.

Loving wife **Purificacion** (†); children **Dr. Domingo** and **Amelia**, **Rosa** (†), **Enrico**, **Irene**, and **Donyette**; grandchildren **Dixie** and **Aldrin**, **Twinkle**, **Ted**, **Rose**, **Mapet**, **Joseph**, **David**, **Lander**, **Chim**, **Mickey**, **Angeline**, **Angelita**, **Eleanor** and **Xandra** request everyone to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at **St. Augustine Parish Church, Baliuag, Bulacan**.

Interment will be on **Saturday, December 22, 2001** at **Baliuag Catholic Cemetery** after the **9:00 a.m. Mass**.

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones, the following establishments can help you.

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FE LINA RILLO

Peacefully joined the Lord on December 17, 2001.

Leaving behind her, husband Rene; sons Richard, Ronald, Raymond; brothers and sisters Alex and Ludy, Aida and Gerry, Glory and Joe, Jing and Julie, Jimmy and Marie.

Mass will be offered at 1:00 p.m. at St. Alphonsus Church, Magallanes Village, Makati City.

Interment will be today 20 December 2001 at Calamba Catholic Cemetery.

LEONCIO PASCUAL MABUTAS, JR.

Peacefully joined his Creator
on December 18, 2001 at the age of 69.

His loving wife **LUZ**; children and children-in-law **LEO**, **LEM & EVA**, **LOIDA & ROD** and **LOUIE**; grandchildren **EZRA**, **LEM ERUEL**, **ROZEL**, **RODD** and **RAY**; sister **LUZ** and **SUSAN** and brother **RUDY**; nephews, nieces, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City until Friday, December 21, 2001 and transfer to his residence at 825 Cabezas St., Dagupan, Tondo, Manila.

Interment will be on Sunday, December 23, 2001 at North Cemetery after the 2:00 p.m. Mass.

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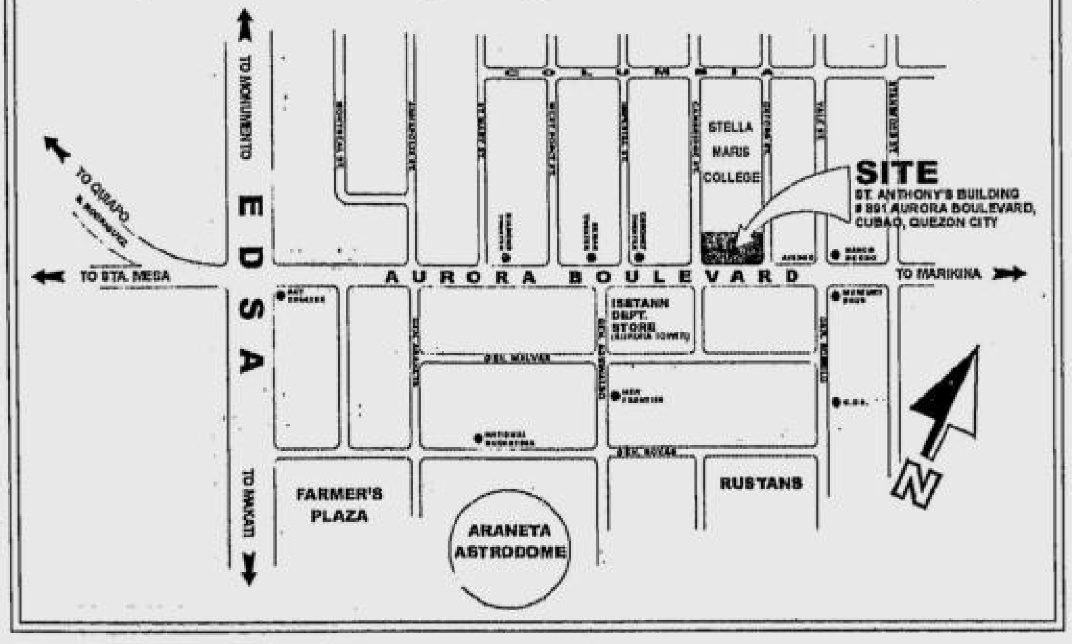

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MOTORING

CESAR D. MANGAWANG, Editor

Aggressive driving observed among metro college students

(Last of two parts)

BY ISAGANI F. YUZON, DPA, UP
Contributor

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

ON THE BASIS of the findings mentioned earlier, the following recommendations are given:

- **Give driver education the importance that it deserves.** Driver education must be a concerted, integrated, developmental and continuing effort, encompassing the whole gamut of society, to develop a consciousness which underscores proper and courteous road use as the concern and responsibility of every motorist. While it imposes the don'ts, it must emphasize the dos and doables. It should veer away from its punitive tradition and stress discipline, cooperation and self-sacrifice.

Firstly, there must be realization that the rapidly deteriorating traffic situation, especially in Metro Manila, will have ill-effects not only on the country's economy but more important, on the health, safety and well-being of the people.

Secondly, there must be recognition that Filipino drivers are not congenitally undisciplined. Their behavior on the road is symptomatic of a system characterized by widespread deprivation, socioeconomic disparity, political manipulation, cultural identity crisis and unabated corruption and criminality. Being so, this behavior, with proper nurturing, guidance and encouragement, can be reshaped and redirected.

Thirdly, there is a need to develop a new Filipino road culture rooted on the country's historical background, cultural heritage, traditional values, economic realities and national vision.

- **Establish an effective driver education system.** To be effective, driver education should be a sustained and continuing program. One study recommends the development of a cost-effective two-stage driver education program that is an integral part of a graduated driver licensing system (discussion of the system is found in the succeeding paragraphs). The first stage would provide basic vehicle handling skills, and the second step would contribute other safe-driving skills, including enhanced decision-making to reduce the risk-taking of young drivers. The effort also includes developing procedures that would extend the role of parents, and other adults, in the process of educating and training new drivers.

This idea is based on the view that beginning drivers are often not prepared to benefit from the safety instruction in driver education. Some students may be preoccupied with achieving the end product—a license—that important safety information is ignored. For others, learning to drive and maintaining basic control of the vehicle are so demanding that safe-driving concepts cannot be assimilated. Thus, it is advisable to enhance driver training following initial licensing and after some driving experience has been gained.

Moreover, a driver improvement feature should be incorporated. This applies to young operators who become involved in crashes or who are cited for traffic violations. A driver improvement classroom course should be designed for young drivers and for traffic violators under the age of 25.

Others suggested that driver education could be considerably improved through careful human factor analysis of the driving task to demonstrate empirically just what makes experienced drivers safer and what makes some drivers more at risk. Through research, behavioral skills identified as important to effective driving could be incorporated in instruction programs.

- **Integrate driver education modules in school curriculums.** Of the three E's of traffic management (Engineering, Enforcement and Education), the third is the most neglected aspect. It is not surprising therefore, that in previous studies conducted on public utility drivers, 98 percent have a low level of knowledge of traffic laws, rules and regulations. The existing modes of learning to drive and knowing traffic laws, rules and regulations—through self-study, friends or relatives and driving schools—had not effectively imparted the appropriate knowledge to drivers. Furthermore, it was established that although educational attainment could help facilitate the acquisition of such knowledge, it could not guarantee sufficient understanding of the same.

Sad to say, there is no system of driver education in the Philippines. At the most, theoretical traffic situations are used as examples in social science classes to explain some concepts and ideas. A person applying for a license is only required to pass a written examination, the answers of which are already marked or given away by fixers. This is followed by a five-minute road test where the applicant is required to move the vehicle forward or backward for at most five times.

Although the Dekalb study, conducted to evaluate the effects of an enhanced high school driver program in Dekalb County, Georgia, found out that while driver education was not a 100-percent solution to eliminate crashes and violations, it demonstrated that "at least during the first six months of licensed driving, students with driver education had fewer crashes," per licensed driver, than students who had not taken the course.

As envisioned, the driver education modules will run through the basic education program in the elementary and secondary levels and will be integrated in classes in civics and social studies. The modules from Grades I to IV should deal with pedestrian and road safety such as walking along and crossing in streets, traffic signal system, traffic signs and pavement markings and the like. On the other hand, the modules for high school will concentrate on prelicensing requirements such as knowledge of traffic laws, rules and regulations and basic skills and capacities needed to drive safety. The modules should be presented in a systematic and organized manner to be effectively absorbed.

- **Encourage parental participation in student driver training.** Driving is a complex and often demanding task even for the best drivers. A safe driver must control a vehicle; comply with traffic laws, rules and regulations; constantly monitor traffic conditions; watch the behavior of other drivers; watch out for children, pedestrians, animals and cyclists; and maneuver in all kinds of weather and road conditions. In addition, drivers must obtain information from constantly changing elements, decide what action to take, initiate that action, assess the consequences, take remedial action if necessary and constantly repeat the process.

All these factors can lead to a situation for which the driver is not prepared or is incapable of handling, increasing the likelihood of a crash.

The high violation, injury and even fatality rates in the first five years of driving demonstrate why varied, long-term training is required. Parents can help their children become safer drivers by ensuring that new drivers build skill and confidence as they develop good driving habits during supervised practice sessions. Parents, new drivers and driver education instructors, working together as a team, can develop behaviors that will reduce motor vehicle accidents.

Parents can play a significant role in developing safe driving habits in the teenage population. They should share hands-on experience as well as feelings about driving under the influence of alcohol and other drugs, peer pressure, cultural values, safety restraints, emotional control and social responsibilities.

One way of doing this is for parents and teenagers to communicate with each other. A parent-teen agreement or contract on vehicle use is an excellent way to ensure safe performance, economical operation and responsible behavior.

- **Adopt a graduated licensing system.** The purpose of a graduated licensing system is to provide new drivers the opportunity to gain driving experience under conditions that minimize their exposure to risk. Somewhat like an apprenticeship program, it is intended to ease the novice into the full range of traffic conditions.

Briefly, this is how the system would work. Limitations are placed on the new driver in terms of such things as when they can drive, where they can drive, with whom and how. These restrictions are gradually removed so that new, more complex traffic conditions can be mastered as driving experience is being acquired. Eventually, full "unrestricted" driving privileges are granted.

It is a fact that a novice makes errors when learning a new skill, particularly a complex, dynamic psychomotor skill like driving. It is also well established that fewer critical mistakes occur as proficiency or mastery in a skill is gained; but proficiency requires extended practice over a considerable length of time. Unfortunately novice drivers are usually launched into difficult driving conditions without this proficiency, so that results are inevitable and predictable.

Graduated systems that are well-designed restrict night driving, limit teen passengers, establish zero tolerance for alcohol, and require a specified amount of supervised practice during the initial period. Graduated licensing laws have reduced teenagers' crash rates in the United States, Canada and New Zealand.

What is needed is a method by which the novice can gain experience and proficiency but under less demanding and risky conditions, so errors and their consequences are reduced. This is the purpose of a graduated licensing system.

The difference

ON THE ROAD
Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

A LOT of people think that if they buy a CBU (completely built unit), the motor vehicle they are buying is exactly the same as a unit of the same make and model manufactured in and for the country of origin. Unless, of course, the car manufacturer declares in its sales and promo brochures or advertisements that the vehicle has been especially fitted for use in the tropics, e.g. the German Opel Astra, Vectra and Omega's "Asian road package."

Questions may arise when a car manufacturer claims that the vehicles it sells here as CBUs manufactured in its home country for export are exactly the same as vehicles of the same make and model manufactured there for the domestic market. In other words, that the export (CBU) version is exactly the same as the US or European version.

A young executive bought a 4.6-liter Ford Expedition Eddie Bauer XLT 4x2 in the United States last year. Driving it gave him such a feeling of safety and comfort that when he was assigned to Manila, he shipped the Expedition here and ordered the purchase, sight unseen, of another 4.6-liter Ford Expedition XLT 4x2 from a local Ford dealer for the use of his wife and children. He did not bother to test-drive it before buying since he knew that it was manufactured in the US and should therefore be exactly the same as the one he had acquired in the US except for the luxurious interior features and trimmings that come with the Eddie Bauer badge.

But he was in for a surprise. The first time he took the wheel of his CBU Expedition, he noticed right away that it was lighter to drive than his US Expedition—it did not have the same road-handling and stability, particularly when turning a corner. He told the dealer about the apparent difference in weight that could mean a lower level of safety, but was assured that the CBU Expedition he had bought has exactly the same standard specs as his US Expedition.

A friend of his who test-drove the CBU and US units one after the other for comparison also noticed the difference and wrote to Ford USA about it. Ford's Customer Relationship, according to him, replied: "Ford Motor Company manufactures vehicles according to state and federal laws. When vehicles are manufactured for export, those vehicles are required to meet the specifications of the government of the country that the vehicle is being exported to, not of the government of the country that is manufacturing the vehicle. We regret that we have not met your expectations in this matter."

That wasn't a very reassuring answer, since the Philippine government's automotive safety specs are not as detailed or as strict as the USA's. The person who brought this matter to my attention points out, "How many of us are using big Fords for our kids, assuming we have the same safety features as a US version? How alarming is this if the export versions lack these features and no safety rating, crash testing, etc. is done on them by Ford?" He wonders if Ford tries to reduce production costs when manufacturing export versions by omitting or changing some features.

Asked about these concerns, Ford Group Philippines replied that "All Ford models imported for the local market are **exactly** the same as what is available in the US... As such, these vehicles have all the standard safety features offered to American consumers and meet or exceed the performance standards required by the US government. This also means that this is the same Expedition and F-150 that earned a Double 5-Star rating for safety from the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Ford will never compromise the quality and safety of its vehicles... The only unique features for the Philippines are the 10-seat configurations offered in Expedition and Club Wagon, which are driven by Excise Tax considerations. Needless to say, all revisions are approved by Ford's Export and Emerging Markets Engineering (EEME) unit based in Dearborn, Michigan."

But the young expat is not taking any chances. For long trips, he doesn't allow his family to use the CBU Expedition he bought locally. He drives it himself and confirms his chauffeur's observation that on the Skyway at 100 km/hr, the CBU Expedition feels so light that it seems about to fly. I myself drove his CBU Expedition and US Expedition one after the other last week and noticed the difference in weight and directional stability. I also noticed that the US unit had the manufacturer's sticker on the edge of the driver's side door with these words: "This vehicle conforms to all applicable federal vehicle safety standards in effect on the date of manufacture shown above." The CBU's sticker, instead of those words, had three lines of asterisks and underneath the word "Type," the following: "US cert void—export."

* * *

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My e-mail address is aida_sevilla@pacific.net.ph

Exalta deserves second look

FULL TANK
Al S. Mendoza

A CAR worth looking into before you buy that dream car of yours this Christmas is the All-New Nissan Sentra Exalta (Grandeur). Its level of refinement seems to outclass its chief opponents in the compact sedan category.

It rides like a luxury car, moves like a sleek limo and runs almost like a sports car. Its luxurious looks and improbable innovations on handling, comfort and safety are beyond our wildest dreams in the S-Class sedan and even in the M-Class cars bracket.

It's a bit expensive (P890,000 for the 1.6 GS Grandeur A/T) but then as I keep saying, quality is always expensive.

* * *

The new Sentra Exalta has a mobile VCD entertainment system with a pop-up screen, an AV steering wheel switch, a rear distance warning system (the car beeps when you are near an object while backing up), a heads-up digispeed display, a hands-free audiophone system and a two-way power sunroof.

The mobile VCD is a fully automated AV package that provides state-of-the-art moving sight and sound; the display screen pops up with a touch of a button.

The AV steering wheel switch provides extra convenience as it enables the driver to adjust the radio tuner and audio volume on the steering wheel.

The rear distance warning system works in tandem with the rear back-up sensor, informing the driver of necessary visual distance information when backing up.

The heads-up digispeed display gives the driver a digital reading of the actual speed rating while driving. And the audiophone system recharges mobile phones and allows the driver-passenger(s) to receive calls automatically through the cabin speakers.

* * *

The all-new Nissan Sentra Exalta has a microfinished crankshaft and camshaft as well as the one-stage silent timing chain effects minimal friction loss. This also means improved fuel economy and lesser engine noise. In fact, you can hardly hear the car's idling when in full stop. Its engine also employs a Valve Timing Control (VTC) which optimizes the opening and closing of the intake valves.

Such are the features of the Exalta that you can easily mistake it for a luxury car: full beige leather seats, woodgrain finishes, 4-wheel disc brakes, two-way power sunroof and many more.

Said Jack HF. Wu, executive vice president of Nissan Motor Philippines Inc.: "The new Nissan Sentra Exalta was the result of revolutionary research and development genes with a high-quality that is evidently seen, internally felt and fully expressed in its luxurious and innovative features. We challenged ourselves to build a car with the feeling and comfort of a medium-sized car at a price accessible to the sedan market. The new Nissan boasts of a bigger space and above-class performance and technology."

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LIFESTYLE

CHELO BANAL-FORMOSO, Editor

MANDARIN Oriental Manila's Christmas Treats hamper

A quick guide to the best delicatessens in town

BY ROWENA C. BURGOS
PHOTOS BY ROGER CARPIO

Part II

FOR AMBIANCE and romance, hotels are the best places to misbehave under the mistletoe. The deli products alone are enough to send temperatures soaring. But if you prefer to eat there, the meals are the perfect prelude to a night of till-dawn partying.

At most hotel deli shops, appetizers, hors d'oeuvres and other treats appeal to the drama in most of us—a fine thing as long as they don't upstage the dishes to follow or prove so irresistible that we overeat. So now here's what's available this Christmas at selected hotels in town.

Mandarin Oriental Manila

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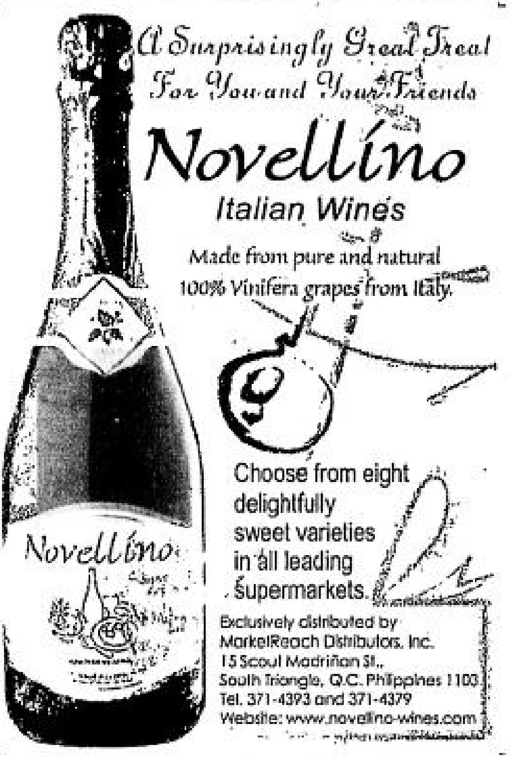
A QUICK/ p.C4



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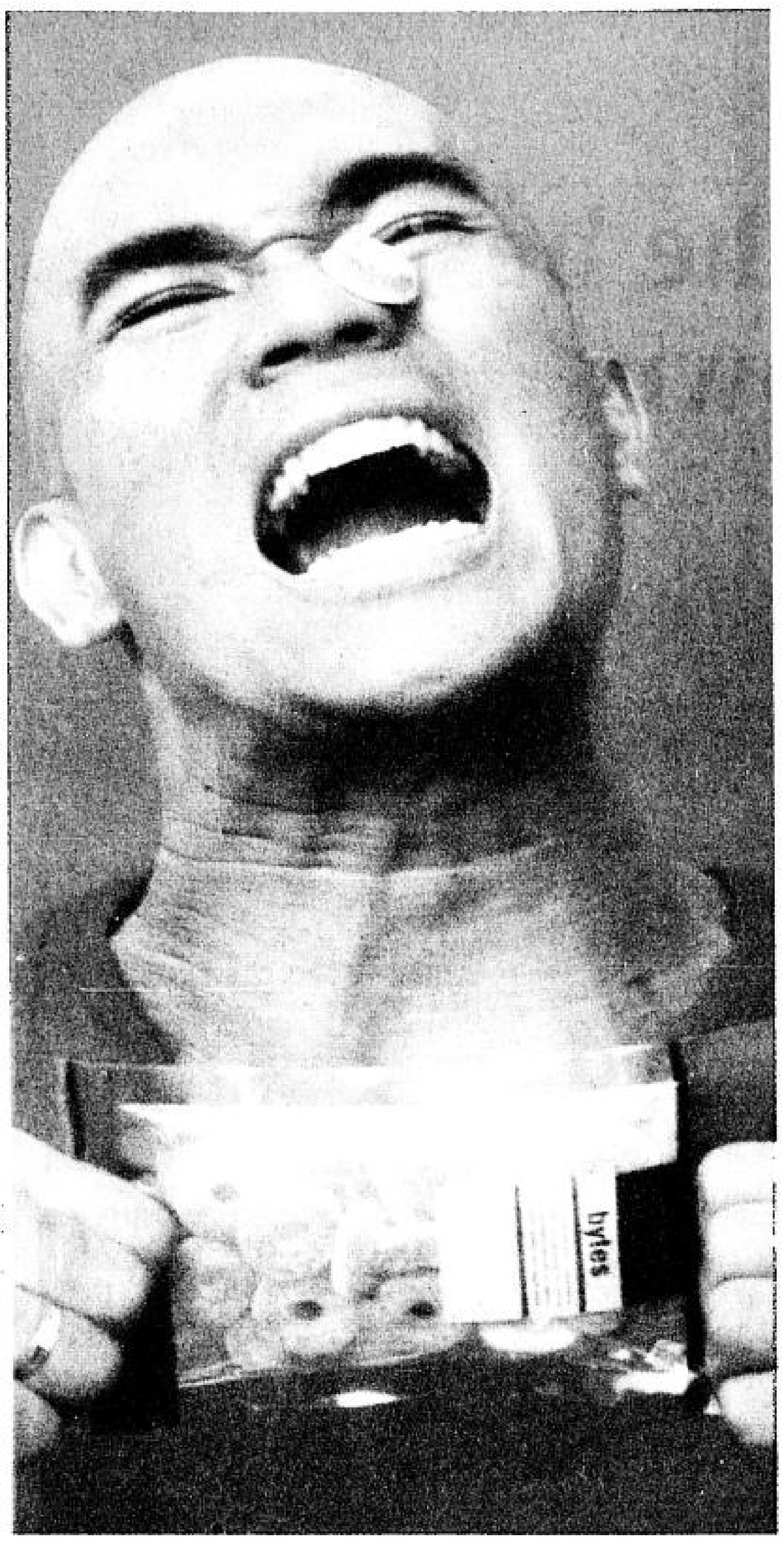

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STEPPING into any trendy Bench store is a treat for all the senses—sight, sound, smell, touch and, recently, taste. **Bench/Bytes, its line of candies, chocolates, peanuts, popcorn and pudding, to name a few snacks, make for excellent stocking stuffers for last-minute shoppers.**

Bench tempts you to indulge your edible passion along with your passion for fashion

Vivian Yao, brand manager for the Bench/Bytes line, says majority of the treats, with the exception of the peanuts, marshmallows and *chichirya* line (homegrown goodies like *tira-tira*, *panocha*, *chichacorn* and *polvoron*) are all manufactured abroad. "Bench/Bytes was launched in late 1999 as part of the 'Bench ready for the century' campaign. We wanted to please all of our consumer's senses," Yao says.

If sweets aren't your thing, there is also a new coffee line called Kape Latte', especially formulated in Singapore which is a cross between mocha and cappuccino. The coffee-table book "Bench Pop Culture," authored by Gilda Cordero Fernando, was launched at the same time that the Chichirya or native food line hit the shelves. "Edible passion is how we like to refer to our treats," Yao says.

SOUR tape candy for only P39

Take a look at these bites/bytes that you can stuff in your stockings, mugs, baskets and whatever as you rush through your last-minute shopping. Remember that Christmas day is but a mere five days away. For peanut lovers there's a whole range—garlic, chili peanut, wasabi and pistachio. Hard candy lovers can take a pick from coffee, cool lychee, menthol, sarsaparilla and tamarind. Kids will love the soft candy line—green mango, melon, milk (a runaway favorite), strawberry and corn, to name a few. There are soft and yummy marshmallows—chocolate, mandarin orange, vanilla and strawberry. Yao says the caramel popcorn is a top seller, as are the gummy candies that come in various colors and tastes—sour mini fruit salad, sour dummies, sour string apple, sour string strawberry, sour tape apple to mention a few.

The goodies are strategically placed close to the entrance or exit, colorful reminders that your tummy needs some indulging, too.

Cathy Babao Guballa

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4298 Series of 2001

American-Italian café opens in Alabang

MENTION Italianni's and what immediately comes to mind are platters of pasta and other delicious dishes for family and friends to enjoy. That's because dining at Italianni's is a celebration of life.

Italianni's Bakery and Café continues this tradition with the Dec. 21 opening of its new branch at the Corte Delas Palmas at the Alabang Town Center. American-Italian dishes are all reasonably priced so that families, executives, young professionals and students can indulge in their favorite fare. Dishes also come in individual servings that are served in a fast, efficient manner.

Have a bite of Italianni's Spinach and Artichoke Formaggio, Minestrone Soap and House Salad with your favorite pasta like Angel Hair Pomodoro, Fettuccine Alfredo and Fettuccine Carbonara.

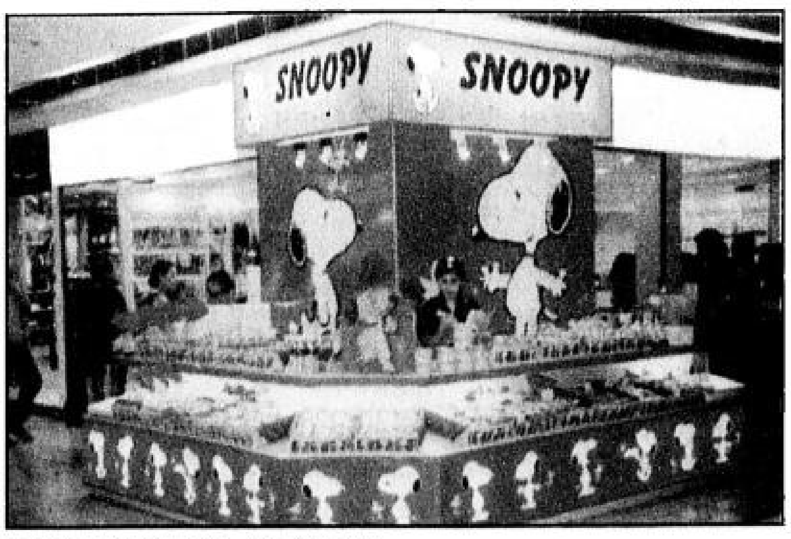
Herb Roasted Chicken and different varieties of *calzones* (BBQ chicken, *adobo* and pepperoni) are also highly recommended. Popular desserts include New York-style Cheesecake, Tartufo and Crème Brûlée, and freshly baked goodies such as Giant Chocolate Chip Cookies and Blueberry and Choco Muffins. And who would forget Italianni's popular tuscan and focaccia breads dipped in a delightful mixture of balsamic vinegar and olive oil?

"We have received numerous requests to open a branch in the south for a long time and we are happy to serve them with the help of our new partners," says Italianni's Bakery and Café general manager Amy Dizon.

The new Alabang branch, a small replica of a full-scale Italianni's restaurant, comfortably seats 80 guests inside its quaint setting, while it can accommodate 20 guests in its patio dining area. Its good location offers guests an oasis amidst the humdrum of the busy mall. Big antique mirrors, sepia and black-and-white photographs and wooden furniture contribute to its cozy, Old-World charm.

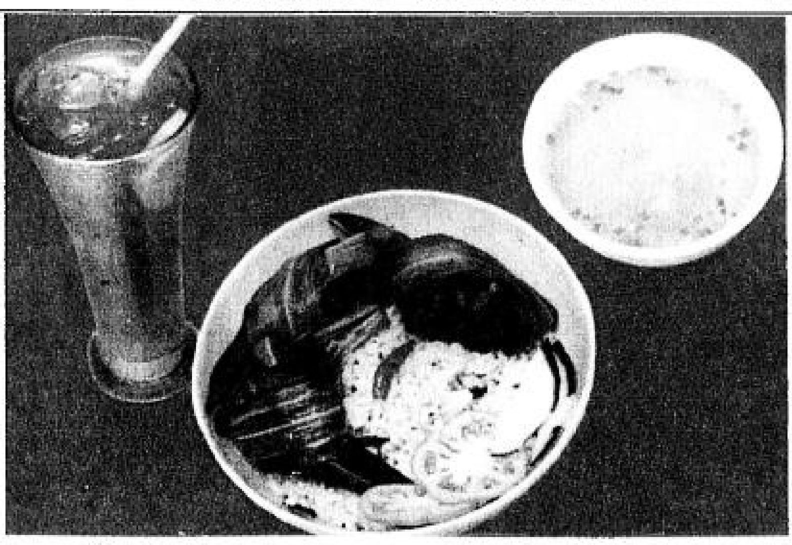
Dizon and her team of supervisors, comprised of Jet Allauigan, Jude Oposa and Buddy Sornbilon, will see that Italianni's Guest Requests Are Never Denied (GRAND) credo is upheld.

Italianni's Bakery and Café also has a branch at the 2/L of the Glorietta IV, Makati City. Watch out for the opening of Italianni's Restaurant at the new Greenbelt Mall very soon.

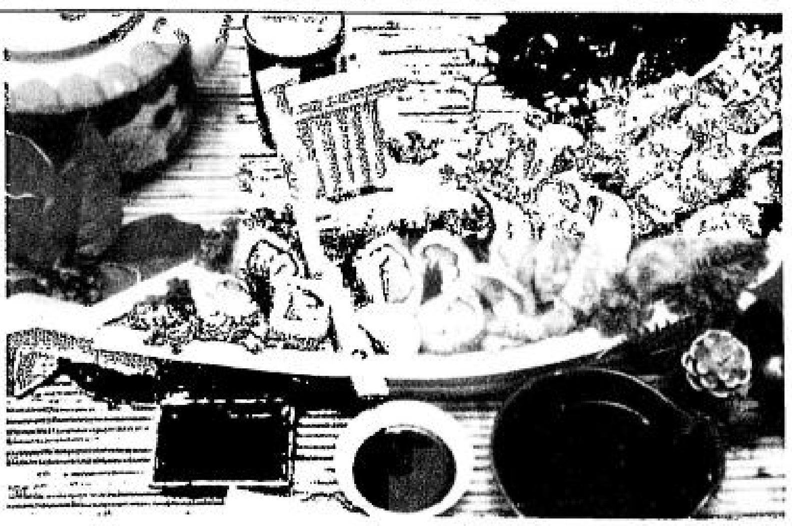


SNOOPY AND FRIENDS
Lollipop cookies of Charlie Brown, Lucy, Schroeder, Sally, Patty, Woodstock and, of course, Snoopy are now available at the Snoopy Bakehouse, located at SM Centerpoint-Sta. Mesa, SM Megamall, SM Southmall and Glorietta 2. Other specialties include Charlie Brownies, Snoopy Junior and minicakes. Call 291-4615.

CHATEAU 1771 Malate and Ortigas offer the traditional *puto bumbong* and *bibingka*. These favorites are available 6 a.m.-10 p.m. daily, except on Fridays when these Pinoy goodies are offered till 12 midnight.



O CAFÉ features Big O Plates, a special set meal complemented with Manila Iced Tea and soup. The plates come in seven combinations, featuring Indonesian, Thai, Japanese, Singaporean and Chinese favorites. Visit O Café at Robinsons Galleria and Power Plant Mall.



KIMPURA offers its "Meri Kurisumasu Boat Feast," a boatful of ebiko rolls, shrimp tempura, yaki gyoza and kushi katsu, all at a special holiday price of P399+. Open for dinner on Christmas Day and on New Year's Day, lunch and dinner, Kimpura is located at 2/L Glorietta 2, Ayala Center, Makati (tel. 893-2307/892-4456) and Greenhills Shopping Center (besides Unimart), San Juan (tel. 721-8816/721-8869).

Where you can dine on Christmas Day

MAKATI SHANGRI-LA's Island Café will prepare on Christmas Eve a *noche buena* spread that includes Grilled Pan de sal with Goat Cheese, Lechon Kawali, Hamon, Arroz Caldo and Spanish Chocolate complemented with Asian savories. Filipino fare comprises Lobby Lounge's gourmet offerings. On Dec. 24, local dishes like Beef Steak Tagalog, Pan-Fried Tanguigue, hams and turkey are featured in the restaurant's Pamaskong Handaan dinner buffet. And until Dec. 25, *puto bumbong*, *bibingka* and native *kakanin* will be offered from 3-5 p.m. Also, on Dec. 24 and 25, Shang Palace will feature family-style lunch and dinner menus for parties numbering at least 10 persons. Selections will include Shang Palace favorites such as Deep-fried Crispy Pigeon, Roasted Duck and Dim Sum. Inagiku offers a buffet of Japanese cuisine, including tempura, imported beef, seafood and vegetable teppanyaki items, sukiyaki, fresh salads and hot dishes for lunch and dinner.

Makati Shangri-La's Cheval Blanc presents a four-course French Continental Christmas Eve set dinner menu, with choice for the main course between Pan-Seared Beef Tenderloin with Sautéed Potato and Chanterelles Mushrooms and Steamed Sea Bass Saummarde on Leek and Oyster Sauce with Diced Tomato.

On Dec. 25, Cheval Blanc's set dinner features for the main dish is a choice between Norwegian Salmon Fillet Koulibiac with Riesling Wine Butter and US Turkey Breast Stuffed with Chestnut, Mashed Pumpkin and Celery.

Call 840-0884 or 813-8888, local 7588 or 7599.

JADE GARDEN is offering for the whole of December its holiday set menu for 10 to 12 persons at the specially reduced price of P7,800+. The holiday set menu includes roasted meat combination, fish lips with sea cucumber soup, Peking duck, peppercorn shrimps, steamed king fish, black mushrooms with broccoli (shaped like a Christmas tree), crabs with *tausi* and garlic, minced duck with lettuce, Yeung Chow fried rice, and for desserts, mango shake with *sago* and sweet dimsum pastries.

The restaurant, which will be open on Christmas Day for dinner and New Year's Day for lunch and dinner, is located at the 2/L of Greenbelt Mall, Ayala Center, Makati, Call 892-2319/2636.

PEKING GARDEN has various hassle-free set menus to suit the budget like its "Our Toast to Christmas" set for 10 to 12 persons. It includes four kinds of appetizers, shark's fin soup with shredded meat, Peking duck, prawns with sweet and spicy sauce, steamed Hilsa Herring or Hong Kong fish, Peking-style barbecued lamb, deep-fried crab with wild pepper and peanuts, braised noodles with mushrooms, steamed supreme soup and pork dumplings, and to cap the fine meal—chilled almond jelly with fruit cocktails.

Specially priced at P8,888+, this Christmas set menu is offered during lunch and dinner until Dec. 31.

Peking Garden Restaurant is open on Christmas Day for dinner and New Year's Day for lunch and dinner. It is at the 2/L of Glorietta 2, Ayala Center, Makati City. Call 819-9066/67.

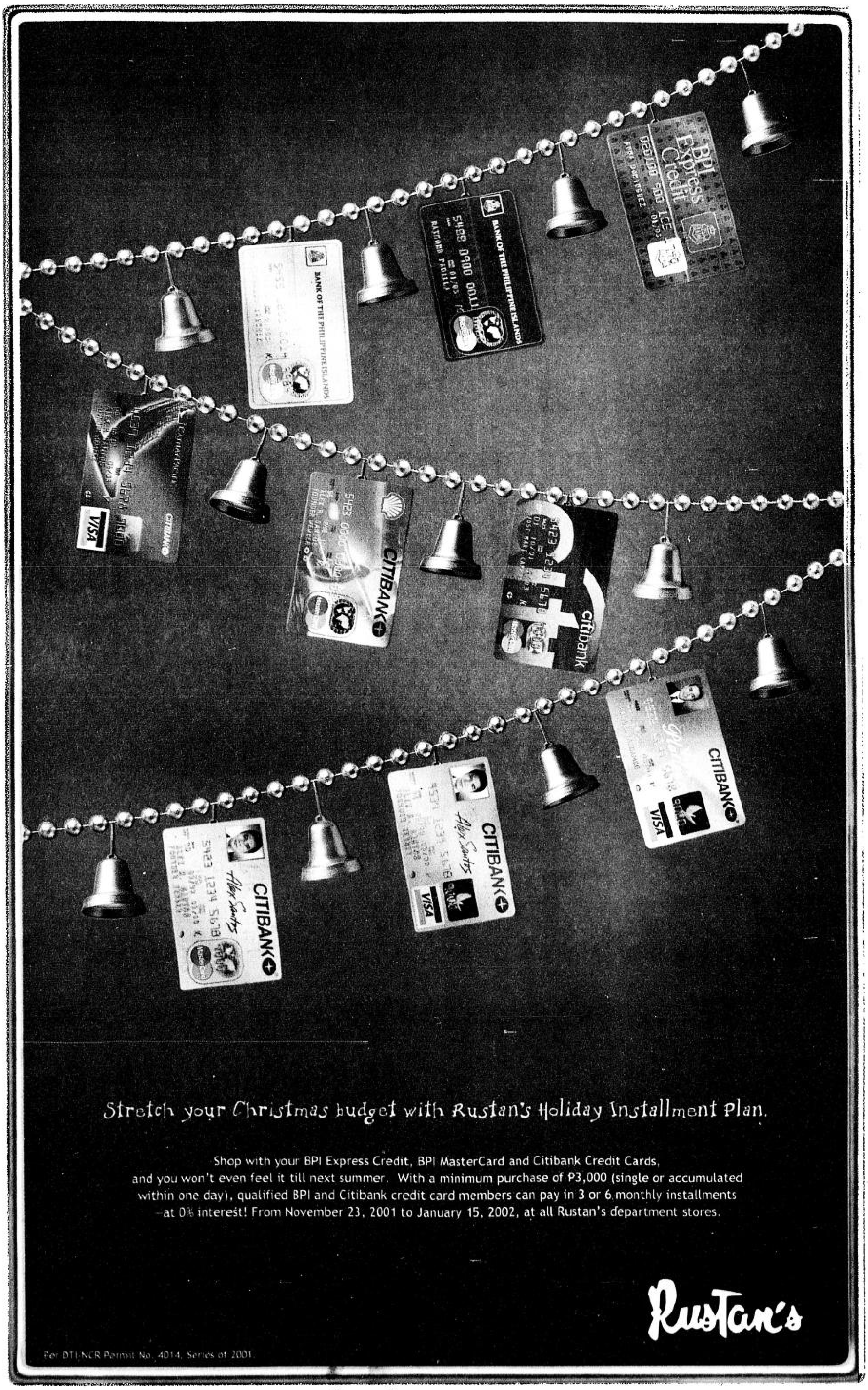
OLD SWISS INN makes Butterball Turkey a perfect centerpiece for your Christmas dinner. It's a roast butterball turkey stuffed with *chorizos*, green olives, raisins and cashew nuts and accompanied with giblet and gravy. Baked in a flaky crust of pastry and topped with gravy, Beef Wellington is truly a holiday treat.

Sink your teeth into Roast Rack of Lamb, which is flavored with fresh herbs and comes with mint jelly and gravy sauce on the side. Have a taste of corned beef the way the Swiss cook it with one of Old Swiss Inn's specialties, the Corned Beef Carving.

Chicken Galantina will surely complete your dinner. This baked boneless chicken, stuffed with ground pork, carrots, raisins, green peas and smoked ham is a familiar fare on the *noche buena* table.

All these are available at reasonable prices in all Old Swiss Inn branches, including its Bon Marche! outlet in Makati. Call Old Swiss Inn at 818-8251 (Makati branch), 521-3002 (Paco) and Bon Marche! (Makati) at 813-3262.

MANILA GALLERIA SUITES presents an international buffet at Raphael Café-Restaurant until Dec. 31. Savor Beef Tenderloin Perigord Style, Truffle Sauce, Chicken Pojarsky with Lime, Fish Fillet Thermidor. Try Chicken and Mushroom Enchiladas with Picante Sauce and Baked Four Seasons Vegetables in Portugal Sauce, Pan-fried Salmon with Asparagus, Hollandaise Sauce. Also, there's Long-Life Noodles, Pork Liver Oriental Style, Grapes, Raisins, Demi-Glaze, Vinegar, Sweet and Sour Fish with Coriander for Oriental food lovers. Call 633-7111, local 7416 and 7440.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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4014, Series of 2001.

DUSIT Hotel Nikko's Yuletide goodies

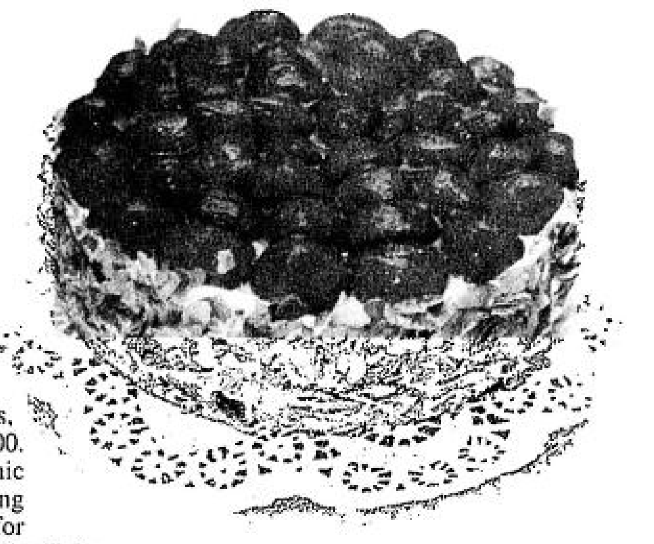
PHOTO BY JIM PUNZALAN

A quick guide to the best delicatessens in town

(From page C1)

cheeses, wines, roast beef and turkey carvings. The hotel also features an authentic Gingerbread House store at the lobby, which is replete with cookies, candies and giant lollipops.

For more festive gifts, delight your loved ones with any of the deli's four elegant Christmas hampers: Yuletide Treasures, P4,500; Christmas Collections, P5,200; Christmas Treats, P6,200; and Gourmet Selections, P8,800. Each is the perfect gift for that picnic lover in your life. And the great thing about it is you don't have to wait for nice weather. Spread a blanket on the living room floor and dig in.



PENINSULA Manila's Strawberry Short Cake

You can also give your hamper a personal touch. Choose from baskets small (P750), medium (P850), large (P950) and extra large (P1,100), or you may bring your own and fill it up with the items of your choice.

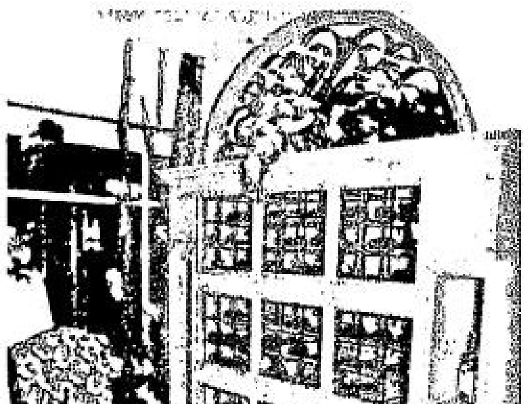
There's also Santa's favorite carvings of whole roast turkey, goose, Beijing duck, honey-cured ham, roast US prime rib, baked leg of lamb and Norwegian salmon. Favorite Delicatessen, on the other hand, showcases marinated salmon, *tanguigue*, mackerel, turkey breast, goose liver terrine and duck liver pate.

For a minimum purchase of P4,200, Mandarin offers free delivery within the Makati area. Call 750-8888.

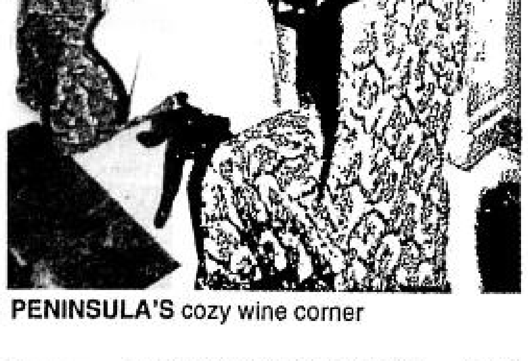
Dusit Hotel Nikko

Searching for something to light up the eyes of your favorite chocoholic? Then stop for beautifully decorated chocolates at Dusit's Deli Shop in the lobby. Also available are confectionery showstoppers such as Vanilla Yule Log (P415), Chocolate Yule Log (P415), decorated Christmas fruitcakes (P600 and P800), Old English Christmas Puddings (P600 and P800), pralines, chocolate Santa Claus (P135, P220 and P360), Gingerbread and chocolate houses (P550, P680 and P980) and special cakes.

There are also seafood items like Sliced Smoked



PENINSULA'S cozy wine corner



PENINSULA'S deli counter

HERITAGE Hotel Manila's holiday treasures

Hotel delis, open long hours, may be your best bets if you're doing last-minute shopping for top-rate gifts

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HINT: Check out *Business Friday* on December 21, for Inquirer's My Wish Box.

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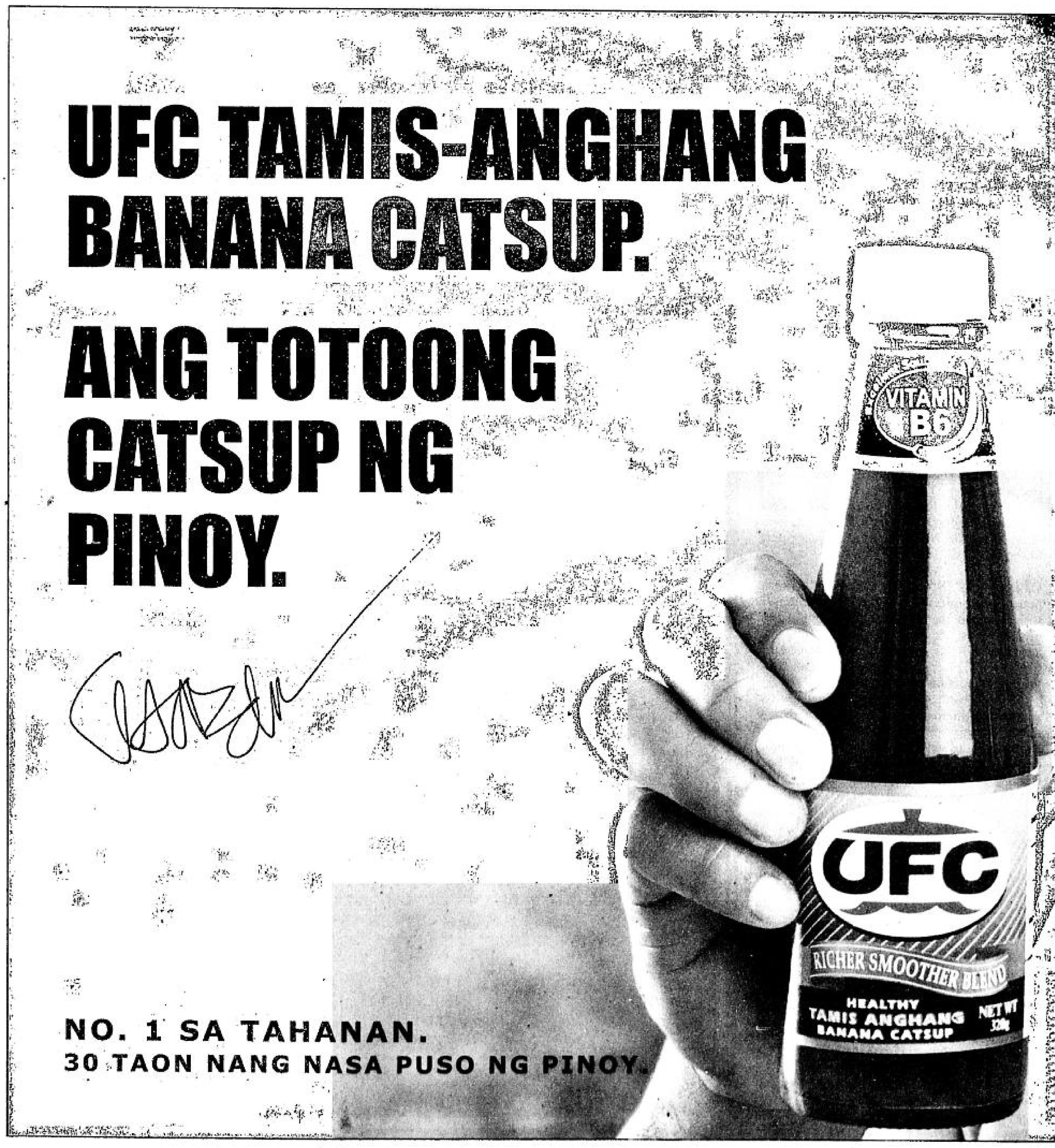

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Dec. 16 - Rev. Fr. Dominador G. Guzman Jr., SSP
Dec. 17 - Rev. Fr. Joseph Faller
Dec. 18 - Rev. Fr. Genaro O. Diwa
Dec. 19 - Most Rev. Fr. Jesse E. Mercado, DD
Dec. 20 - Most Rev. Teodoro C. Bacani, Jr., DD
Dec. 21 - Rev. Fr. Màrio Sobrejuanite, SSP
Dec. 22 - Msgr. Roberto C. Canlas
Dec. 23 - Rev. Fr. Peterson O. Tieng, LRMS

PHOTO BY RANDY HORMILLOSA

CENTURY Park Hotel's wines

MANDARIN Oriental Manila's deli shop

Tanguigue (P680 per 500 g), Smoked Norwegian Salmon Platter (P1,500), Assortment of Smoked Seafood (P1,280), Dusit Homemade Cured Salmon (P1,280, two days notice required for made-to-order).

Dusit's deli has also prepared a variety of main attractions like Roast American Tom Turkey (P850 per kg), Honey Glazed Ham (P760), Beef Wellington (P1,300, P2,250 and P5,500), Roast US Rib-eye (P2,800), St. Martin's Goose (P6,500 per piece) and Roast Stuffed Suckling Pig (P5,000).

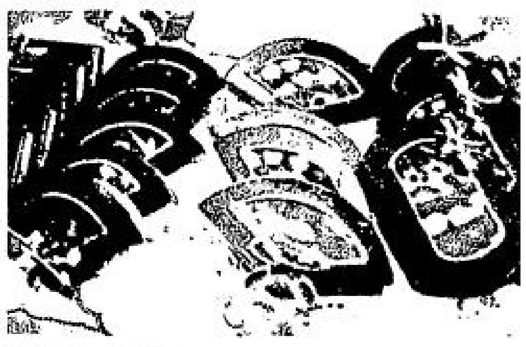
Call 867-3333.

Peninsula Manila

Exclusivites of Manila Peninsula offers festive hampers: Santa's Choice, P7,900; Christmas Special, P5,700; Pine Selection, P4,900; Teddy's Things (P1,000); Bear Necessities (P850); and Rudolf (P750).

There are cakes and pastries, chocolates and wines. But if you want to enjoy the high-end luxuries of the season, check out the Pen's Smoked Salmon (P2,900 per kg); Russian Beluga Caviar (P9,000); Russian Oscietre Caviar (P4,900); Russian Sevruga (P4,200); Terrine of Foie Gras (P535 per 200 g); Foie Gras in Ceramic (P1,445 per 400 g) and Roast Prime Rib of Angus Beef with Natural Jus, Horseradish and Mustard (P1,900).

Call 887-2888.



MANDARIN'S chocolates

Century Park Hotel

White, whole wheat and rye aren't enough for you? Then how about different kinds of freshly baked breads and signature cakes and pastries from Century Park Hotel's Deli Shop?

The shop has cozy corner tables for a quick bite. It offers Belgian waffles, wines, chestnut cakes, Gingerbread House, honey-glazed ham, fruit tartlets, assorted Christmas cookies, Christmas chocolates and cold cuts.

Call 528-5851 to 52.

Westin Philippine Plaza

The Westin Philippine Plaza makes it easy for you to pick your presents this Yuletide season. Find the ideal gift to warm the heart at Café Plaza's Deli and Goodies Counter. Mouth-watering pralines, cookies and pastries in cheerful Christmas boxes and wrappers abound in different shapes and sizes. The Deli Counter also features pre-packed elaborate gift hampers. You may select the items for your hampers to suit your preference and discriminating tastes. Complete your Christmas and New Year casts with delectable Ham, Turkey, Salmon and Prime Ribs prepared in the traditional style of home-cooked meals.

Call 551-5555, local 1529.

MANDARIN'S executive chef Norbert Gandler

Heritage Hotel Manila

It's goodies galore at the Heritage! Celebrate the season with traditional specialties like Festive Yule Log, Gingerbread House, Dark Fruitcake, chocolates, novelties and a lot more! Hampers, priced from P2,000-P5,500, are also available for sale.

Not to be missed is the cake of the month, the Holiday Apple Curd. Feel the warmth of the season with the wonderful mingling of apple filling, almond paste, citron-flavored cream cheese, streusels, topped with Yuletide marzipan portrait. A gilt box is yours to keep for a whole piece worth P600.

To make the season more festive, try the wines of the month, Chateau de Bire and Le Vieux Moulin, available at P1,200 per bottle.

Call 854-8888.

E-mail the author at rburgos@inquirer.com.ph

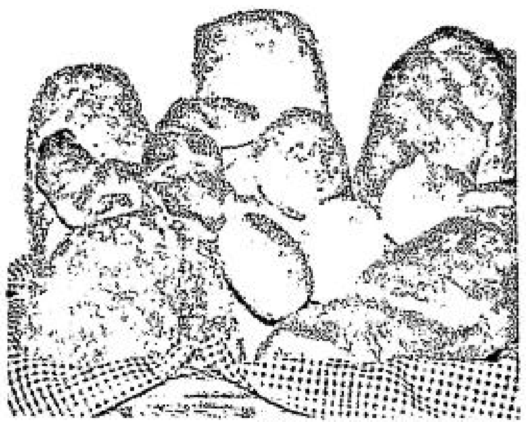


PHOTO BY RANDY HORMILLOSA

CENTURY Park's freshly baked breads

CENTURY Park's honey-glazed ham

PENINSULA'S hamper

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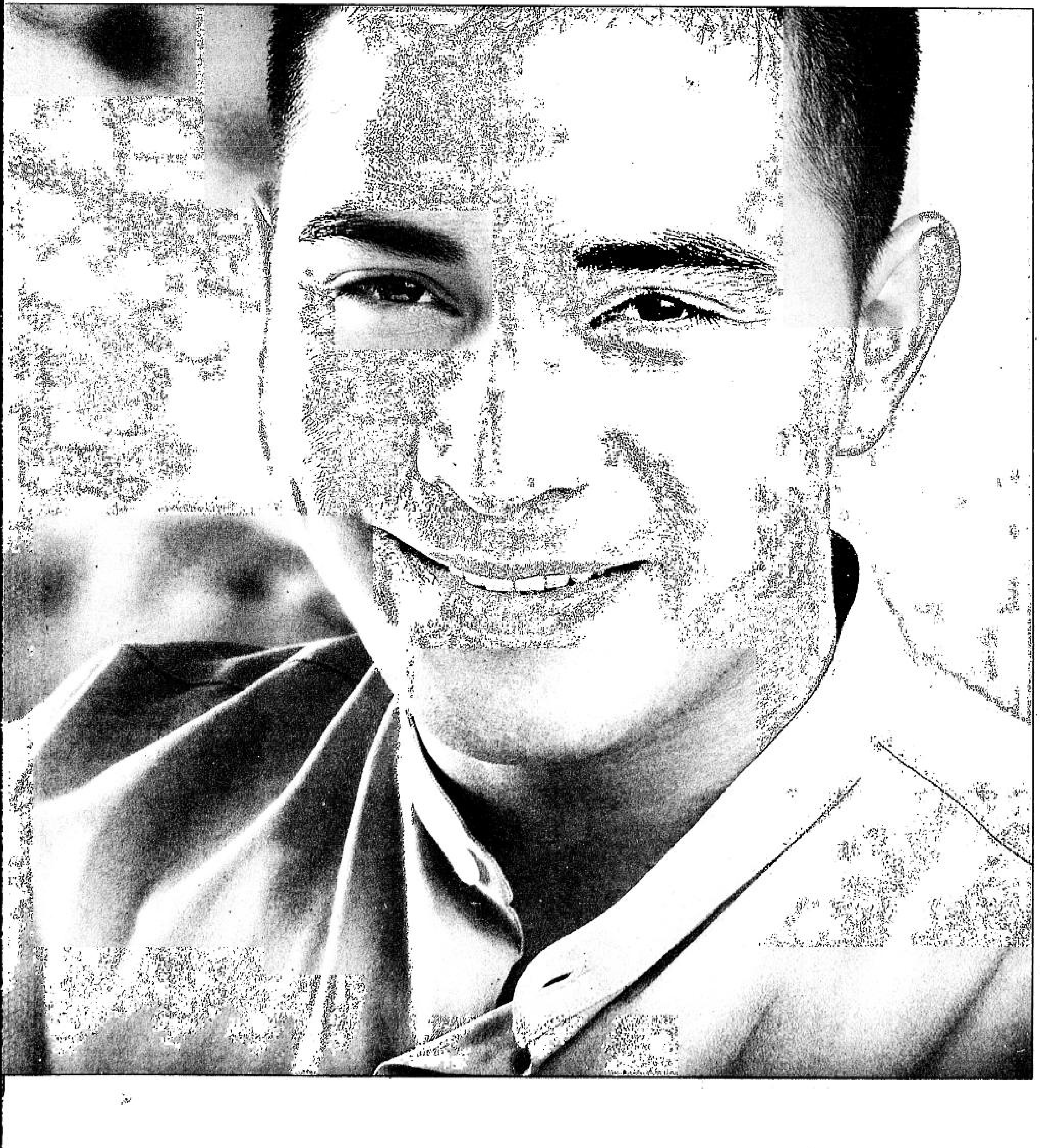


FOLD egg white mixture with the cocoa mixture. To fold, use an "over-under" motion—scoop batter from the bottom of the bowl and bring it up over the top.

PLACE batter in a wax paper-lined tray. Spread equally and bake for 20 minutes at 160ºF. With this recipe, you can fill up two trays. Let cool and set aside.

FOR THE CHOCOLATE icing, heat the heavy cream.

Merrily, merrily roll a Yuletide log

WITH AN ELECTRIC mixer, whisk in egg whites at high speed until lightly fluffy. Gradually add sugar until soft peaks form.

Making a good Christmas log is really fun and worth the effort

By Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Johnny Villena

THE BUCHE de Noel, a.k.a. Christmas log, is a welcome addition to your repertoire of cakes in this season of indulgence.

The Christmas log is a luscious sponge cake with chocolate icing. The sponge cake is carefully rolled and roughly coated with creamy icing to make it look like a real log. "The Christmas log is something that can double as a centerpiece and as a dessert," says Carina Suarez, pastry chef of Discovery Suites in Ortigas Center.

STEP BY STEP

If you want to make the log look more authentic, create a small branch by cutting the roll diagonally and attach it onto the sides of the main roll and cover the gap with icing.

Making a good Christmas log is really fun and worth the effort. And while it's always going to taste great, it's also a visual treat that is sure to impress your guests.

Suarez gives a few helpful tips to first-timers on how to prepare the meringue and how to properly fold the batter. "Gradually add sugar to the egg whites so as not to remove the air," she says. "And, when you fold, you're gently combining a delicate ingredient (whites) with a heavy one (batter). By using a light touch, you won't smash all the air out of the whites. First, stir some of the whites into the batter. This makes folding easier. Now, add the rest of the whites and fold, using an "over-under" motion—scoop batter from the bottom of the bowl and bring it up over the top. As you fold, rotate the bowl with each stroke, but keep your stirring arm in place."

The sponge cake must be chilled for at least 30 minutes to "set"' the chocolate filling before slicing. For additional garnish, hull or halve fresh fruits and arrange them on plates along with a sprig of mint.

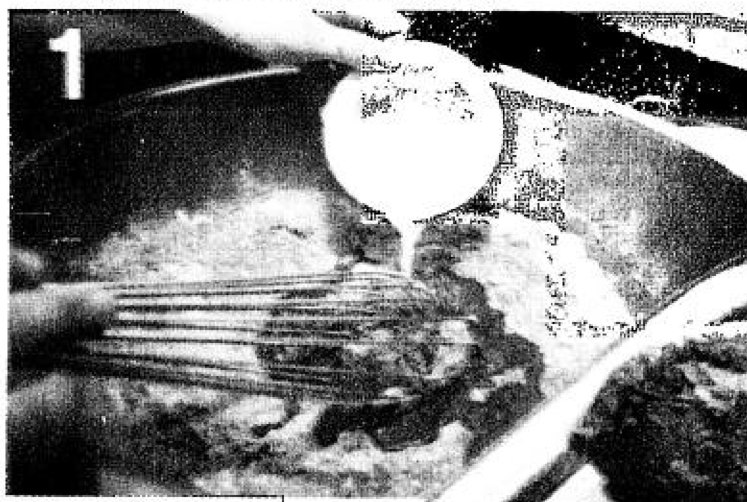
POUR heated cream over dark sweet chocolate. Whisk until the chocolate is well melted. Let cool. Set aside.

IN A MIXING bowl, whip the Lactofil at high speed until soft peaks form. (Set aside two ½ c of icing for making Christmas hollies later).

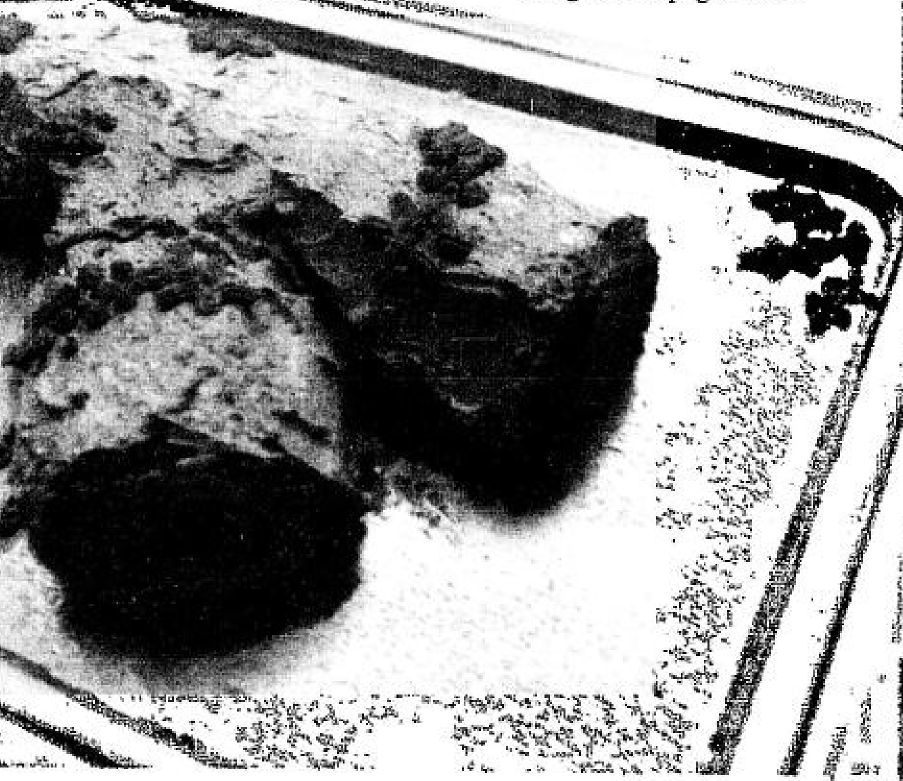
TURN off the mixer and add the chocolate mixture. Whip again until well blended. Set aside.

TO ASSEMBLE, remove sponge cake from the tray, leaving the wax paper on.

USING a spatula, gently and evenly spread icing on top of the sponge cake. Then carefully roll the cake. Use the wax paper to help you start rolling the cake, then continue rolling just the cake. Keep that first "turn" fairly tight. And be sure the cake is rolling, not sliding. Make sure that it is tightly wrapped to remove air inside.



TO PREPARE the sponge cake, combine sugar, cake flour and cocoa powder. Mix well. Add baking soda, baking powder, water, oil and egg yolks. Blend well. Set aside.



MAKE Christmas log your holiday centerpiece.

For sponge cake:

250 g sugar
100 g cocoa powder
200 g cake flour
10 pc egg yolks
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp baking soda
¾ c oil
¼ c water

For meringue:

10 pc egg whites
150 g sugar

For chocolate icing:

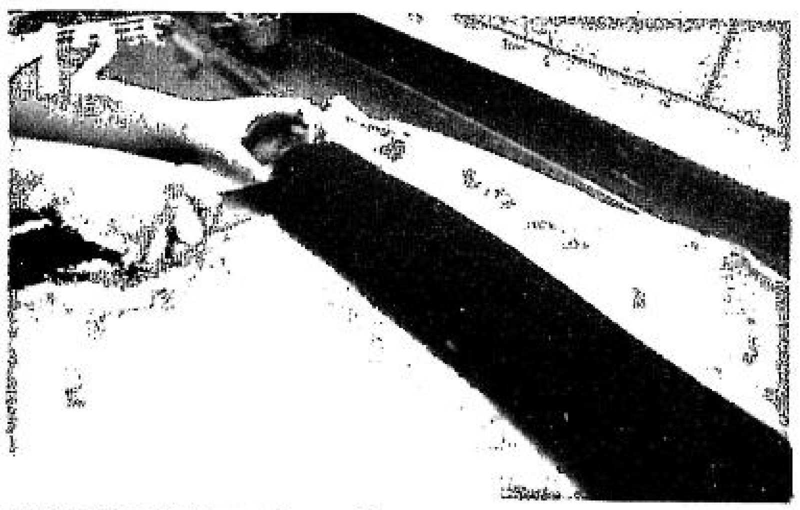
1 kg dark sweet chocolate, chopped
1½ c heavy cream
2 liters Lactofil (or any sweet whipping cream)

E-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph

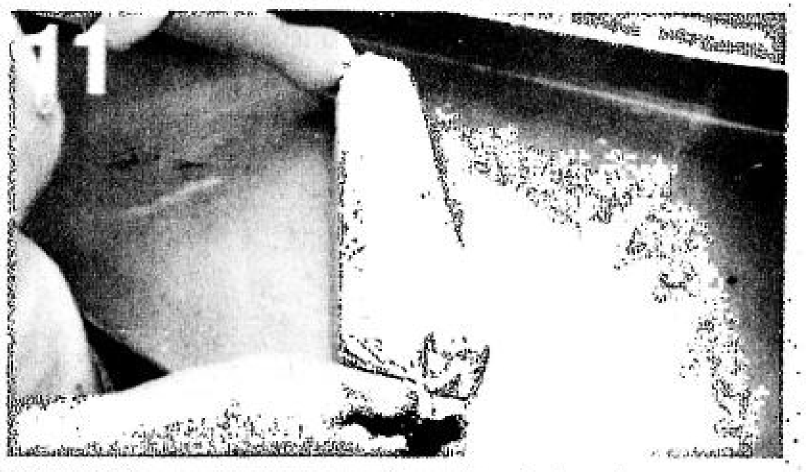
DUST cake with powdered sugar. Then, cut the cake diagonally and attach it to one side of the main cake.

TO MAKE Christmas hollies, add green or red food coloring to the reserved icing and scoop into piping bag.

SPREAD the remaining icing on top of the chocolate cake roll.



TRIM off ends to see the swirl.



REMOVE the used wax paper and transfer cake to a clean wax paper and wrap again. Twist the sides to seal. Refrigerate. After at least 30 minutes, remove the wax paper.

Holiday packages delivered at your doorstep

CHRISTMAS can be such fun. But it also means having to come up with a complex menu and a long shopping list and become the gracious host despite a whole day of cooking.

So Domino's Pizza offers holiday packages delivered hot right at your doorstep for a hassle-free party. Its Christmas party packages are ideal for office and school get-togethers. Domino's offers four types of packages, depending on the number of people and nature of the party: School Party packs for grade school and high school classroom parties; Office Party packs for Corporate Christmas parties; Family Reunion packs for annual clan reunions; and Barkada Drinking Party packs for friends who simply love to get together.

Domino's is bundling its pizza varieties with side dishes and desserts to bring the perfect touch to a party. What makes Domino's Christmas Party Packages unique is that it offers a flexible price point per head, depending on the customer's choice of what would go into his package. All party food fares are baked without oil or fat using the unique screen process.

Most importantly, Domino's ensures that these party packs will arrive at your home, school or office on time.

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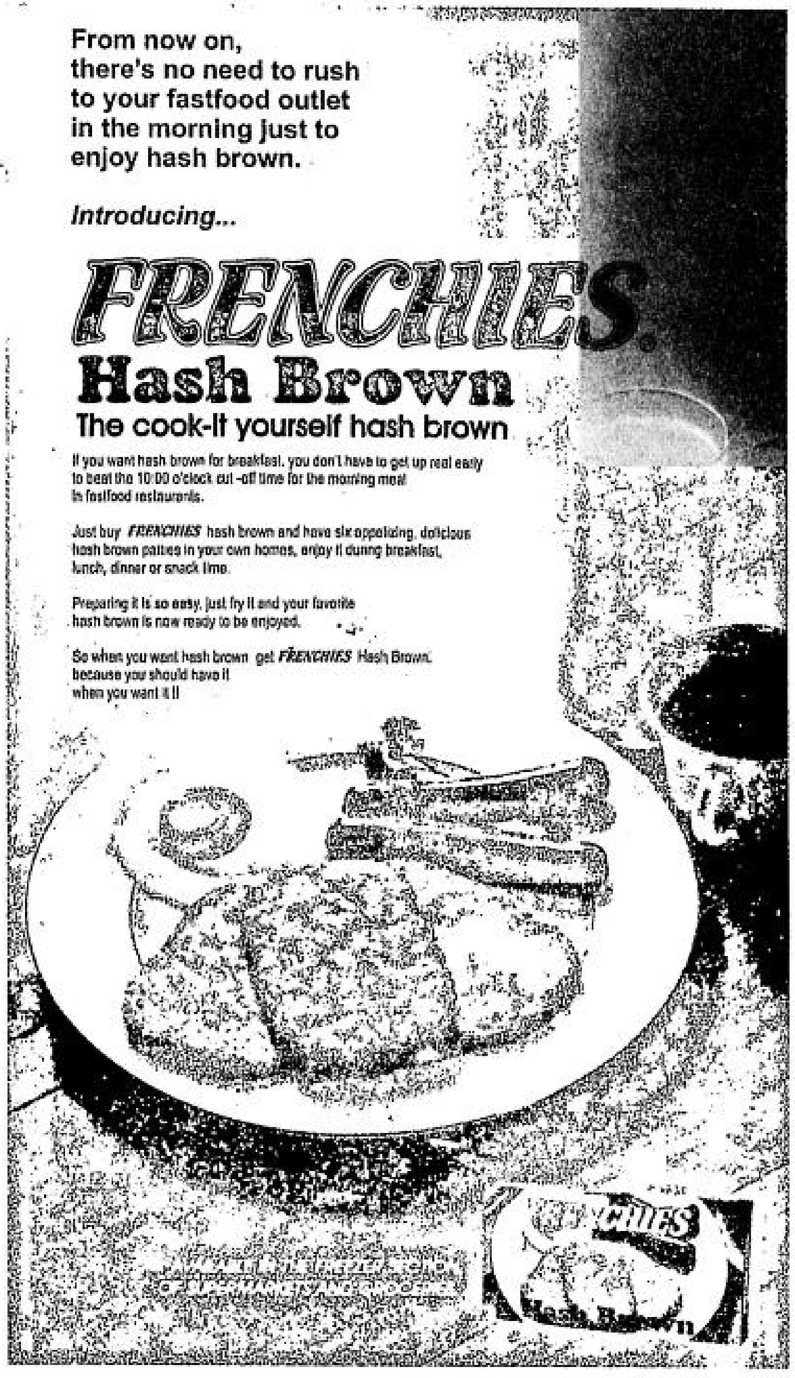
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So when you want hash brown get *FRENCHIES* Hash Brown, because you should have it when you want it !!

Keeping culinary traditions alive

WHILE not all feast days are strictly observed in our country—like the Spaniards—the Filipinos' love of eating, drinking and good company reaches its peak during the holidays.

"In Spain, just like the Philippines, Christmas is a celebration of family and religious traditions," says Don Anastacio de Alba, culinary consultant of Las Paellas de Alba Restaurant.

Don Alba shares more of Spain's Christmas traditions and his fondest memories of Christmases past:

Candlelight services. Spaniards light tiny oil lamps in their homes. It is said that the most beautiful of these candlelight services is held at the Montserrat Monastery.

Misa de Gallo. Bells are rung with the approach of midnight for La Misa del Gallo (The Mass of Roosters).

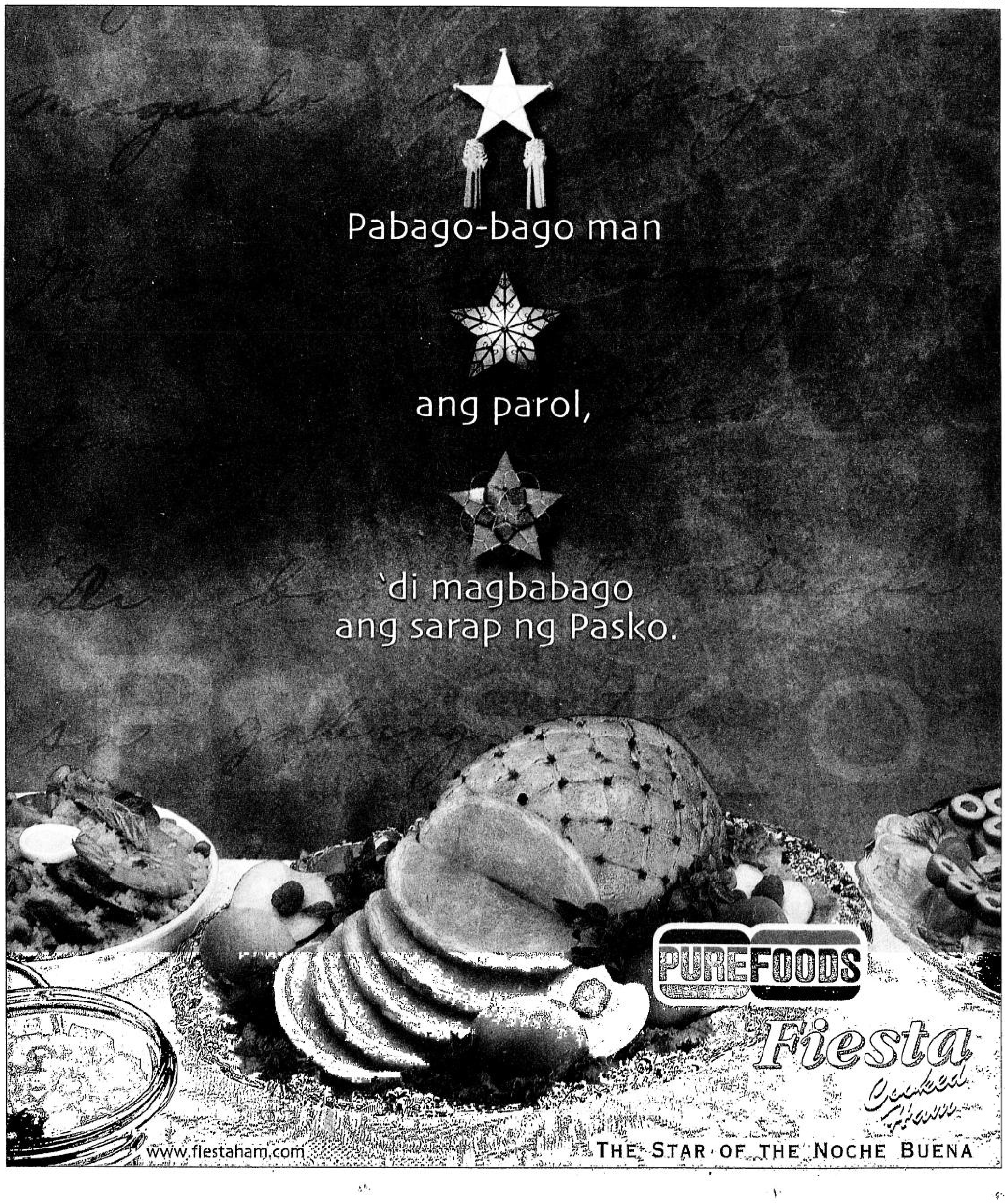
Noche buena and holiday fare. Christmas dinner is eaten only after midnight. As in many Spanish households, Filipino homes are filled with the aroma of generous servings of their favorite fare during the *noche buena*.

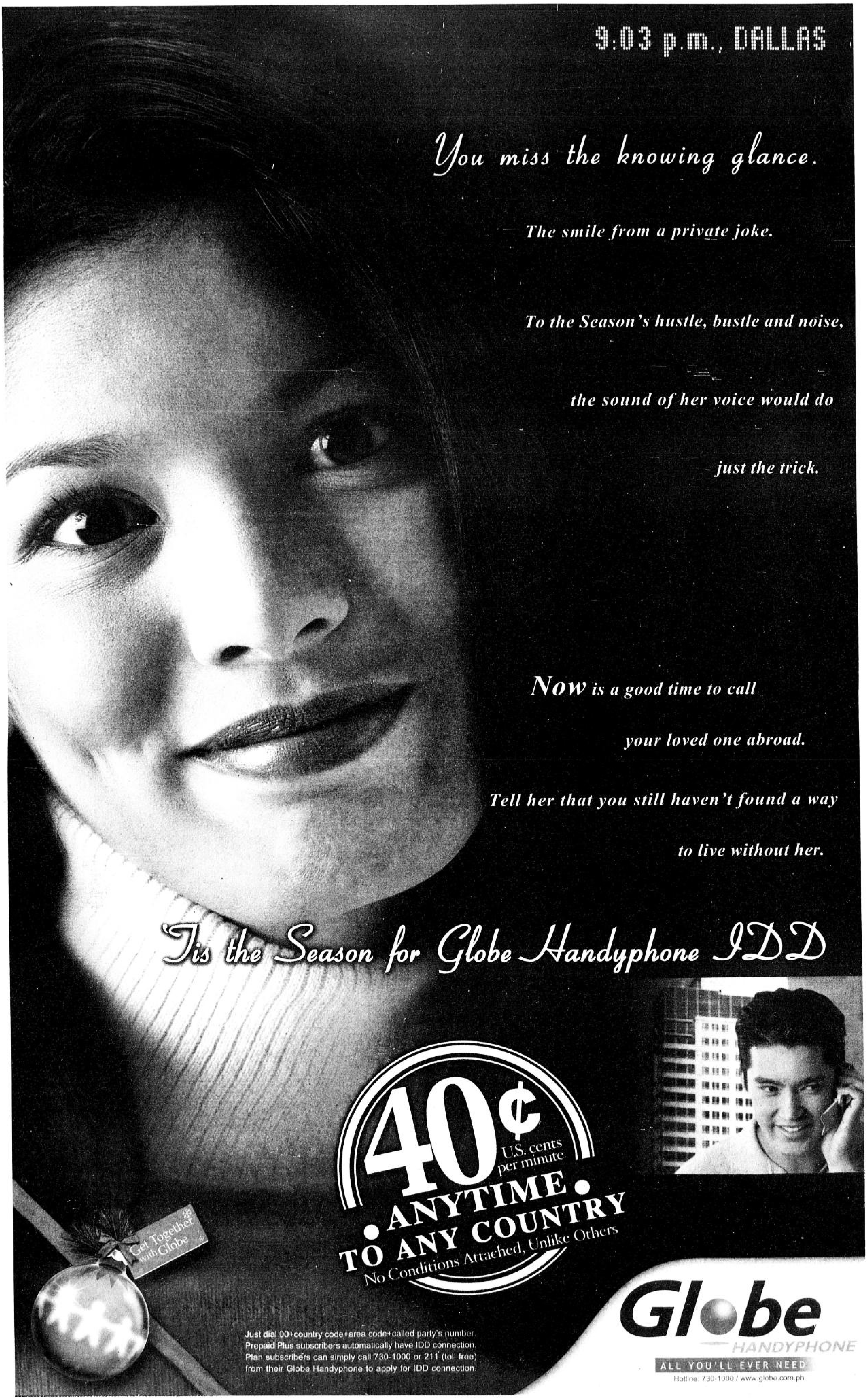
"The food that Filipinos have for Christmas Eve dinner is basically the same with what we have in Spain—*jamon*, *queso*, bread, sweets, hot chocolate, nuts and the like," relates Don Alba.

Popular Spanish dishes during Christmas are *besugo*, *bacalao*, *turron*, *castañas*, *angulas* and homemade cookies with the *anis del monos*. "The Christmas table is also highlighted with *pavo* (turkey) and *cochinillo*, (tender, oven-roasted suckling pig), *cordero* and roasted meats."

Las Paellas de Alba Restaurant is promoting these Spanish culinary traditions during Christmas. "We offer them a taste of Spain like our homemade *jamon serrano*, *pollo galantina*, *relleno*, *queso manchego*, *angulas* (sautéed baby eels in olive oil), *paellas*, *cochinillo* and *turrones*," say Las Paellas chef Don Alba and his partner, Ramon del Gallego Jr.

Visit Las Paellas de Alba and discover the best of Spanish cuisine any time of the year. Catering services are also offered. Las Paellas branches are located at Tomas Morato, QC (371-4588) and Alabang-Zapote Road, Muntinlupa City (807-0352, 850-8824).





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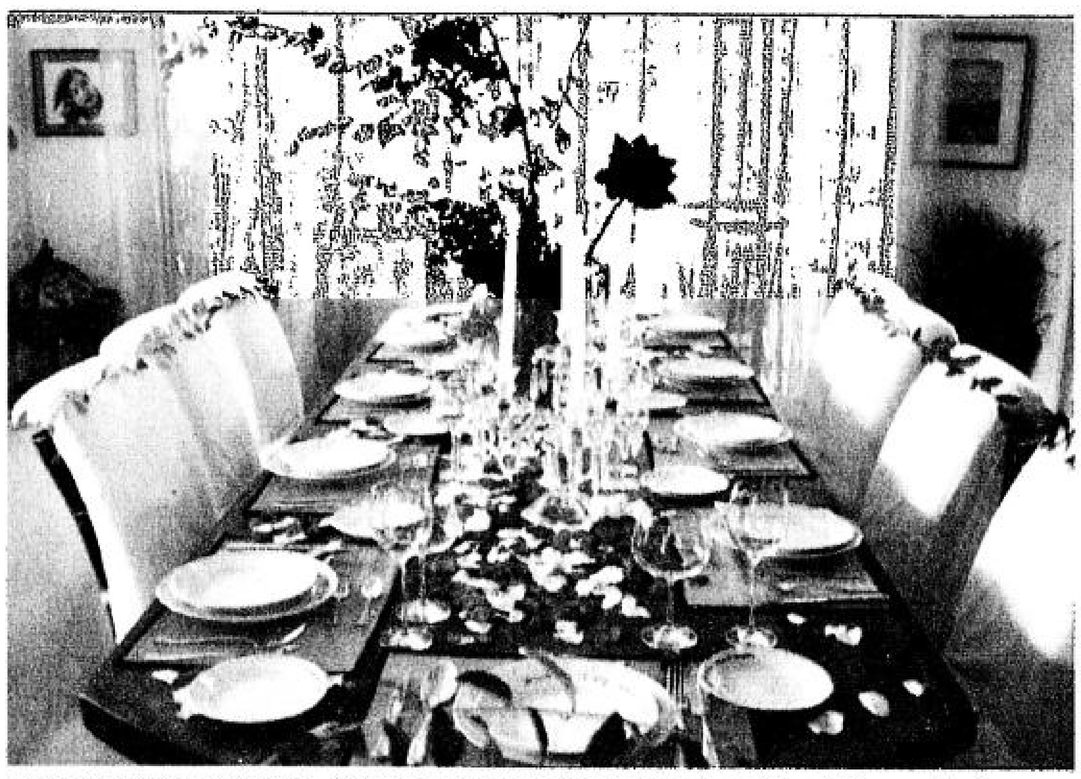
LIFESTYLE



FRAGRANT AND FRESH. Cabalen owner Maritel Nievera's holiday table sports the white Christmas look. White and red rose petals, scattered on the table, give a whiff of floral scent. A twig of red bougainvillea from the garden becomes centerpiece for a setting that's easy on the pocket.

All set in white for the holidays

PHOTOS BY CHITO VECINA

WHITE is the motif for the holiday table of Maritel Nievera, the unassuming owner of the Cabalen chain of Capampangan restaurants.

"Nothing elaborate, nothing expensive," says Nievera of her pristine setting. She dresses the table and chairs in white, accenting the light, clean look only with snatches of color lent by the red rose petals scattered on the table, the green twigs around the chair backs and a cut of red bougainvillea from her garden as centerpiece.

Since she is serving Campampangan food, she uses chinaware that carry the lyrics of "Atin Cu Pung Singsing," the most popular Capampangan ditty. The same plates are used when President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is a guest at any dinner hosted by Nievera or catered by Cabalen. The President's father, the late Diosdado Macapagal, who was the country's ninth President, was a true-blue cabalen.

Most requested

Around Christmas at Nievera's highly popular eat-all-you-can, eat-all-you-want restaurant, the buffet table is laden with the most requested Campampangan dishes: *parada ng lechon* (crisp, succulent, tender cuts of roast pig nonstop, from opening till closing). Also tempting diners are other Cabalen specialties: Morcon (giant roullades of holiday meat with all the secret seasonings; ***see recipe on page D2***); Asado Dila (ox tongue slivered and dashed with just the right amount of flavorings); and Fish with Mayonnaise (a difficult dish to prepare it has to be offered only during special family gatherings). On the side is the fascinating Pako Salad with Salted Egg dressing (***see recipe on page D2***). The Christmas feast ends with choice native desserts: *buko pandan* salad, rice cake and cassava cake.

How Nievera is able to offer such a feast for only P220 for adults and P95 for kids below 4 ft (plus VAT, don't say we didn't warn you) is a puzzle to other food entrepreneurs, but city diners and their country cousins have obviously been hooked and keep coming back for more.

A good turn

During the Christmas season, diners at Cabalen do not only indulge themselves but also get to do some underprivileged countrymen a good turn.

For the past five years, Nievera has been raising funds for its annual project, Cabalen para sa Kabataan, by setting aside a percentage of every centavo generated in December. Two months later, in February of the following year, Nievera distributes gifts to less fortunate Filipinos.

She first started the Cabalen gift-giving in February of 1996, after she saw for herself the sad plight of her fellow Capampangans when Mt. Pinatubo erupted. The following year, Cabalen para sa Kabataan was formally conceived. After three consecutive years of sharing the blessings with the children of Pampanga, however, Nievera realized her hometown was already on its way to recovery. But there was no turning back. Thus,

ALL/p.D2

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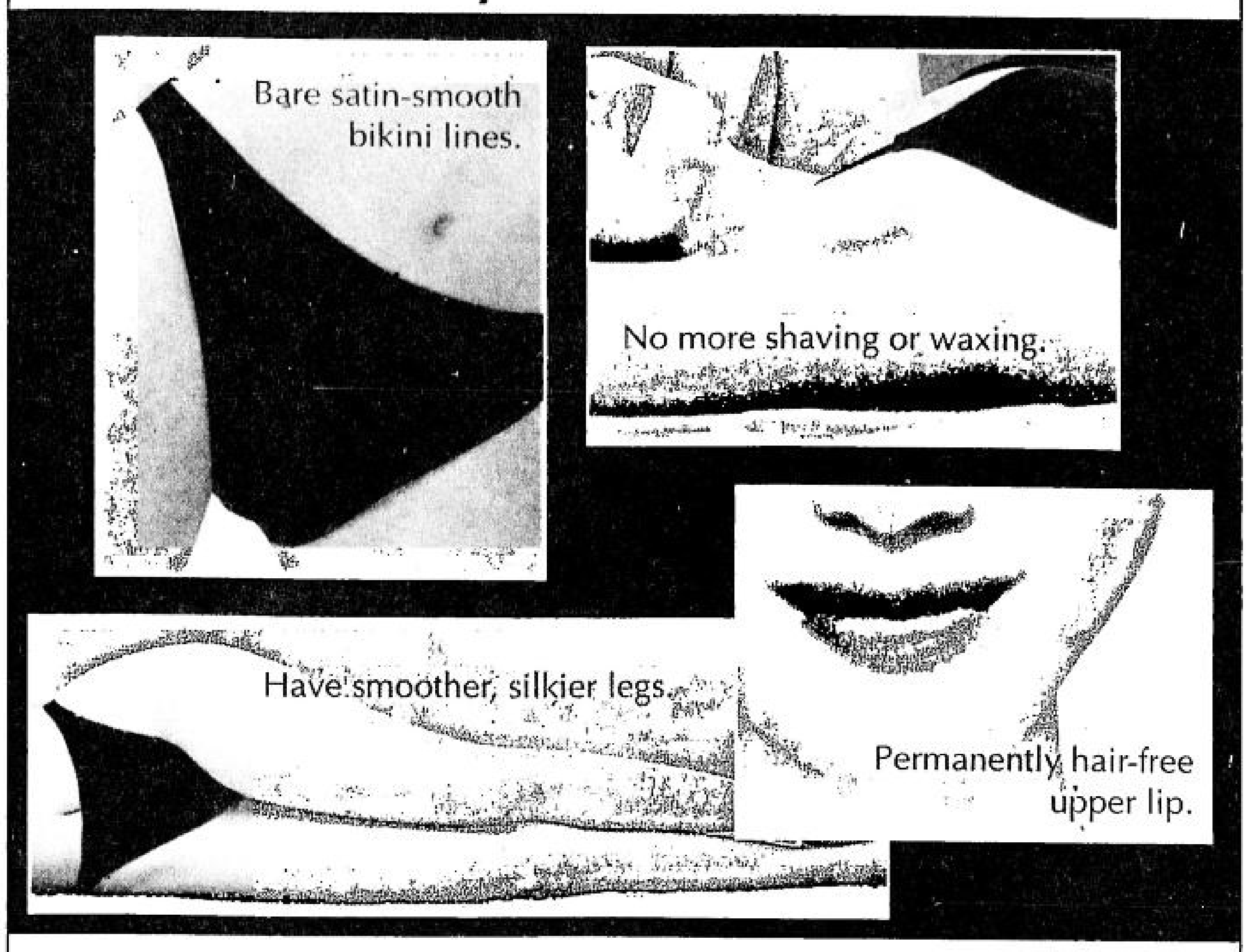

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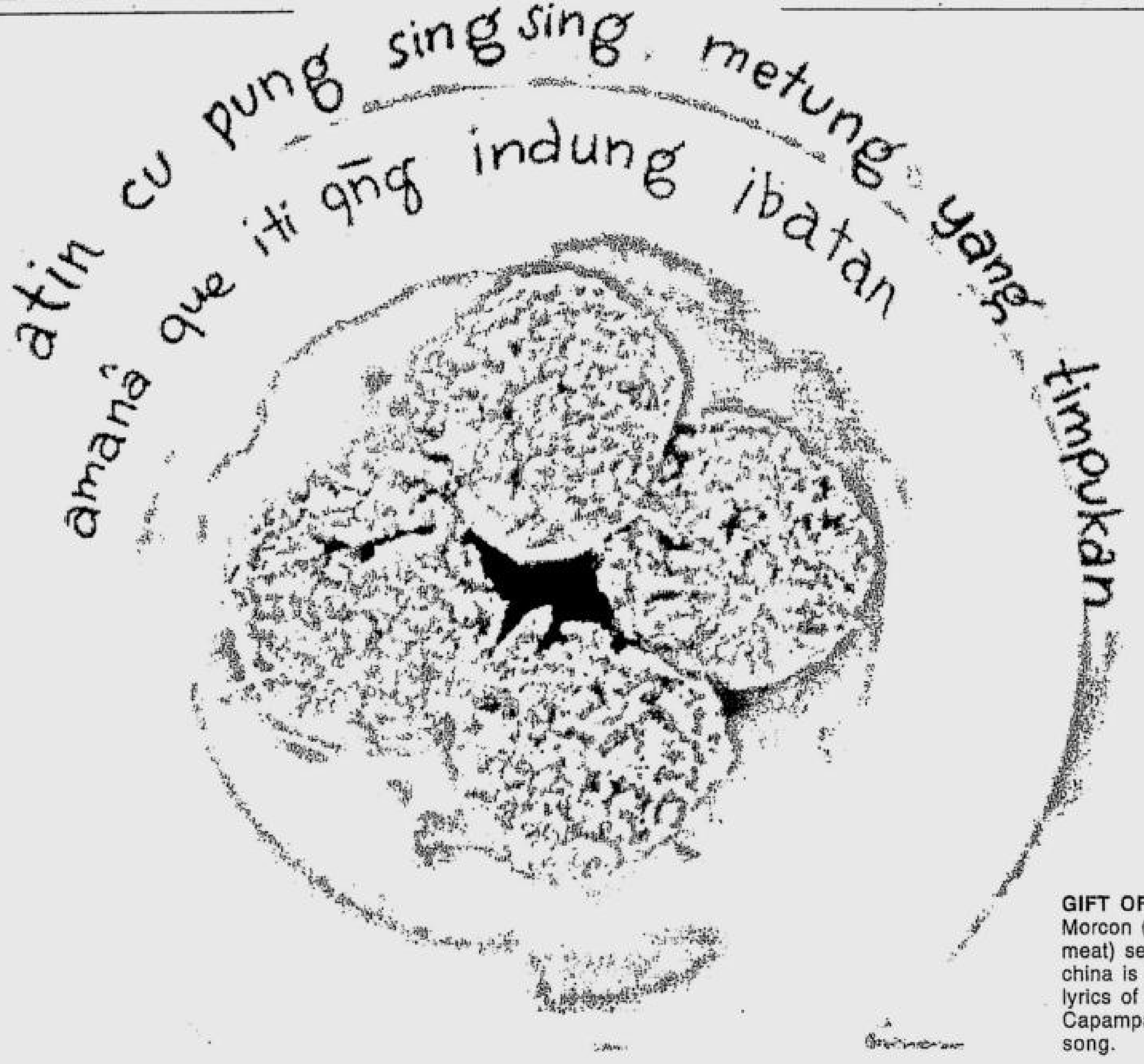

atin cu pung singsing, metung yang timpukan
amanâ que iti qñg indung ibatan

GIFT OF SONG. Morcon (roullades of meat) served in white china is inscribed with lyrics of a Capampangan folk song.

PRISTINE. Maritel Nievera believes in sharing her blessings.

All set in white for the holidays

No need to spend a lot to set a festive table, says Cabalen's Maritel Nievera, who goes for the clean, fresh look of white on white, with a dashes of color from flowers and twigs

(From page D1)

the tradition continued but this time, Nievera played Santa to the poor families of Malabon.

Benevolence may attract diners one time but it won't make them return so Nievera makes sure that diners get their every centavo's worth at Cabalen by serving over 40 food choices every day.

Cabalen outlets are located in prime malls such as Glorietta 3 Ayala Center, SM Megamall, Robinsons Place Manila, SM North Edsa, SM Manila and Sta. Lucia East Grand Mall. They also have one along West Avenue, QC, and another on Katipunan Avenue, Blueridge. Special Christmas packages are available for in-store parties. Cabalen also caters for all occasions. Call 647-5088.

Ensaladang Pako

1 kg *pako*
Sauce:
100 g tomatoes, stewed, seedless, peeled
50 g onions, minced
75 g salted egg, minced
¼ c olive oil
1/8 c white wine vinegar
2 tsp Knorr aromat

Discard mature stems of *pako*. Wash thoroughly in running water, drain and set aside. In a casserole, bring to boil 10 cups water. Drop drained *pako*. Blanch for 1 minute. Remove from boiling water. Cool in running water. Drain. Put in a clean covered container. Chill. Blanch tomatoes, let it cool. Peel skin, discard seeds then minced. Set aside. Peel onions then mince. Set aside. Peel salted egg then mince, set aside.

In a clean mixing bowl, combine minced tomatoes, onions and salted eggs. Mix. Pour little by little olive oil while stirring. Add Knorr aromat. Pour little by little white wine vinegar while stirring. Taste. Ready to serve.Underline with clean banana leaves cardinal ceramics. Put chilled *pako*. Serve with sauce in the middle.

Pork Morcon

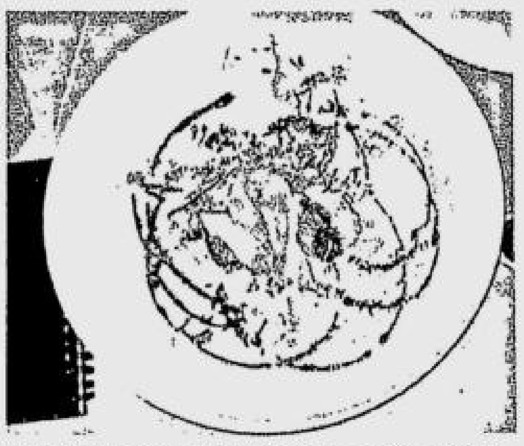
2.5 kg ground pork
1 kg onion red, chopped finely
1 kg tomato, seedless, chopped finely
100 g garlic, crushed and fried
1 can *chorizo de* bilbao
200 g *quezo de bola*
10 pcs chicken egg
2 tbsp salt
2.5 kg *empella*
5 c cooking oil
1 gal water
½ kg *atsuete* sauce fresh

Prepare all ingredients. Peel onions and chop finely. Set aside. Cut tomatoes, remove seeds, chop finely and allow to drip. Peel garlic, crush and fry until light golden brown in color. Grate *quezo de bola*. Slice and grind *chorizo de bilbao*. Wash chicken egg, separate yolk, set aside. In a clean food container mix all ingredients homogeneously and chill. Wash *empella* in running water and drain thoroughly. Prepare *atsuete* sauce by soaking fresh *atsuete* in water, macerate to extract color and strain.

Wrap ground pork mixture in *empella* and tie around to avoid bursting. Discard excess *empella*. Arrange in steamer and kettle. Cook *morcon* in *atsuete* sauce for 1 hour in low fire. Pour cooking oil and cook for another 15 minutes. Cool and arrange in a clean food container. Serve. Makes 25 pieces.

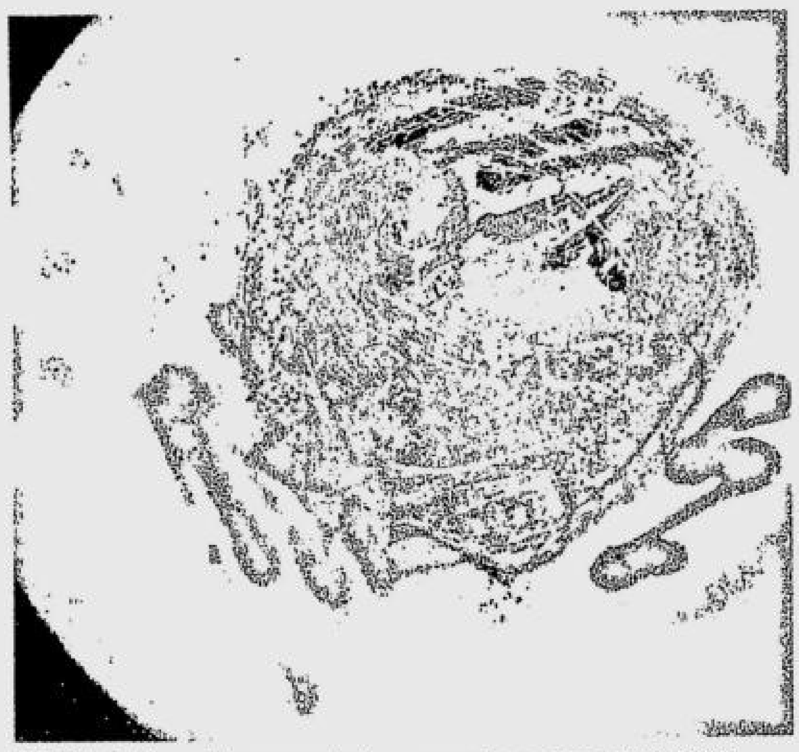
GREEN PIECE. *Pako* salad, Cabalen style

HENRY Canoy



SESAME-SOY. Tofu triangles with mango slices

NORI-WRAPPED tuna sashimi with lettuce rampant



FRESH fruits and homemade ice cream in a spun-sugar cage

Henry's brave, new world

No tired tastes and no overworked combinations at this Boni Avenue cook's studio

IN GOOD TASTE

Doreen G. Fernandez

HAVE you ever had dishes you had never tasted before, but which seemed comfortable and familiar? Where or when had they entered your consciousness? Have you ever discovered yourself tasting new, hitherto unknown flavors, and found yourself coming home? Has your tongue ever led you to never-tasted combinations, which surprisingly made you say, "*Ummmm... kilala ko 'yan.*"

Have your tastes ever made you feel that the world was new, freshly created, just-minted, and you were its first conquistador? Nothing trite, nothing hackneyed, not a single cliché? No tired tastes, no overworked combinations, just a brave new world of taste?

I had never felt like that—till the other day when for the first time Eggie Apostol and I sat down to lunch at Henry's.

Chef Henry Canoy (yes, he says, he is related to all the Canoys of Mindanao, and they all eat with him often) is an old friend whom I have followed through his work at the Pearl Farm and the Westin—but not at the *carinderia* that he ran for a while to keep in touch with the nitty-gritty of cooking, serving and pleasing a mass audience.

For six years now, he has been at this restaurant (641 A, B, C Boni Ave., Plainview, Mandaluyong City 1501; tels. 632-534-0475; 632-535-7239; e-mail chef_henry@hotmail.com; hfcuisine@msn.com), which grew from one bay to three in those years. "It took five years for you to find your way here," he said, and we agreed that it was long, but worth the wait.

Freestyle cuisine, a cook's studio, is what he calls Henry's. No printed menu exists, only a blackboard up above the cooking counter, on which colored chalks list some dishes and beverages. They are only signals, however—semaphores to flag down your tastes. Henry, his friend Noel Silverio (who came from a Dumaguete restaurant and is on his way to a new Makati place), and his pride, Manang Adel formerly of La Tasca—they jam, design, interpret, play, run to tradition, run wild, dance to the tunes in their imaginations and in their guests' tastes.

We said: Cook us what you wish; play with our palates; surprise us; we have complete faith in you. "*Basta* low cholesterol," added Eggie. And here is what came to our table in magical serendipity.

First, cheese-nori roll tempura drizzled with raspberry sauce, sprinkled with pesto—like long thin *lumpia* or tempura, sliced in long slender diagonals—delicious. It was supposed to be a sampler, but we finished it, and sopped up every bit of sauce. "*Hating kapatid*," we told the waiter, "but please don't take the plate away." Never had we had anything similar or analogous. This was brand new.

Then: Sesame-soy blackened tofu triangles with mango slices, green salad vegetables, and a ginger glaze. Oh wow. The tofu was soft, textured, flavorful. Blackening, a term that comes from the Cajun blackened catfish (burned black with spices in a pan), had never, in my experience, been applied to tofu. I was reminded, having just returned from Okinawa and its longevity food, how tofu is healthful in all its transformations. This one had such flavor lashings of ginger, mango sweetness, sesame and soy.

The next dish was an architectural delight: a stand of lamb's lettuce, crisply green, rampant and surrounded by little lozenges of tuna sashimi, pinkly fresh, wrapped in black nori, sparked by finely grated ginger. The sashimi was heaven enough, but with the crisp green leaves, each individually glistening with balsamic dressing, it was a brave new world.

Oh please, this must end, we protested weakly. We really did not want the cavalcade to stop, but we were afraid we would not have room for dessert.

Just one more, assured Henry: a plate with slices of lamb saddle on one side, and blue marlin on the other, mussels around them, and a pesto-flecked pasta in the middle. Both were perfect. What could one say in the face of such pleasures?

"Dessert!" we exclaimed, watching a chef spinning sugar behind the counter. It came: very healthy, even for a diabetic like me: fresh fruits (mango and apple slices, grape

HENRY'S/p.D4

Scent of baked apples

IT'S the season of apples so why not take advantage of their availability and bake this coffeecake, which will make a great snack or, in a pinch, even dessert.

Apple-Nut Coffeecake

Sweet dough:
2 tbsp instant yeast
2 tbsp sugar
½ c lukewarm water
¾ c milk
1 whole egg, graded extra large
1 egg yolk
½ c softened butter
½ c + 2 tbsp sugar
1 tsp fine salt
5¾ c sifted all-purpose flour
Additional ½ c all-purpose flour for dusting
Filling:
¼ c butter
4 Granny Smith apples, peeled and chopped
½ c coarsely chopped walnuts
½ c raisins
2 tsp cinnamon powder
½ c sugar
2/3 c apple jelly, mango jam or orange marmalade
Topping:
2-2½ tbsp water/rum/milk/apple juice
3 c sifted powdered sugar

Oven temperature: 350°F
Baking pan: two 8" round baking pans, 3" high
Baking pan preparation: Grease the sides and bottom of the pan with lard
Yield: 8 servings per pan

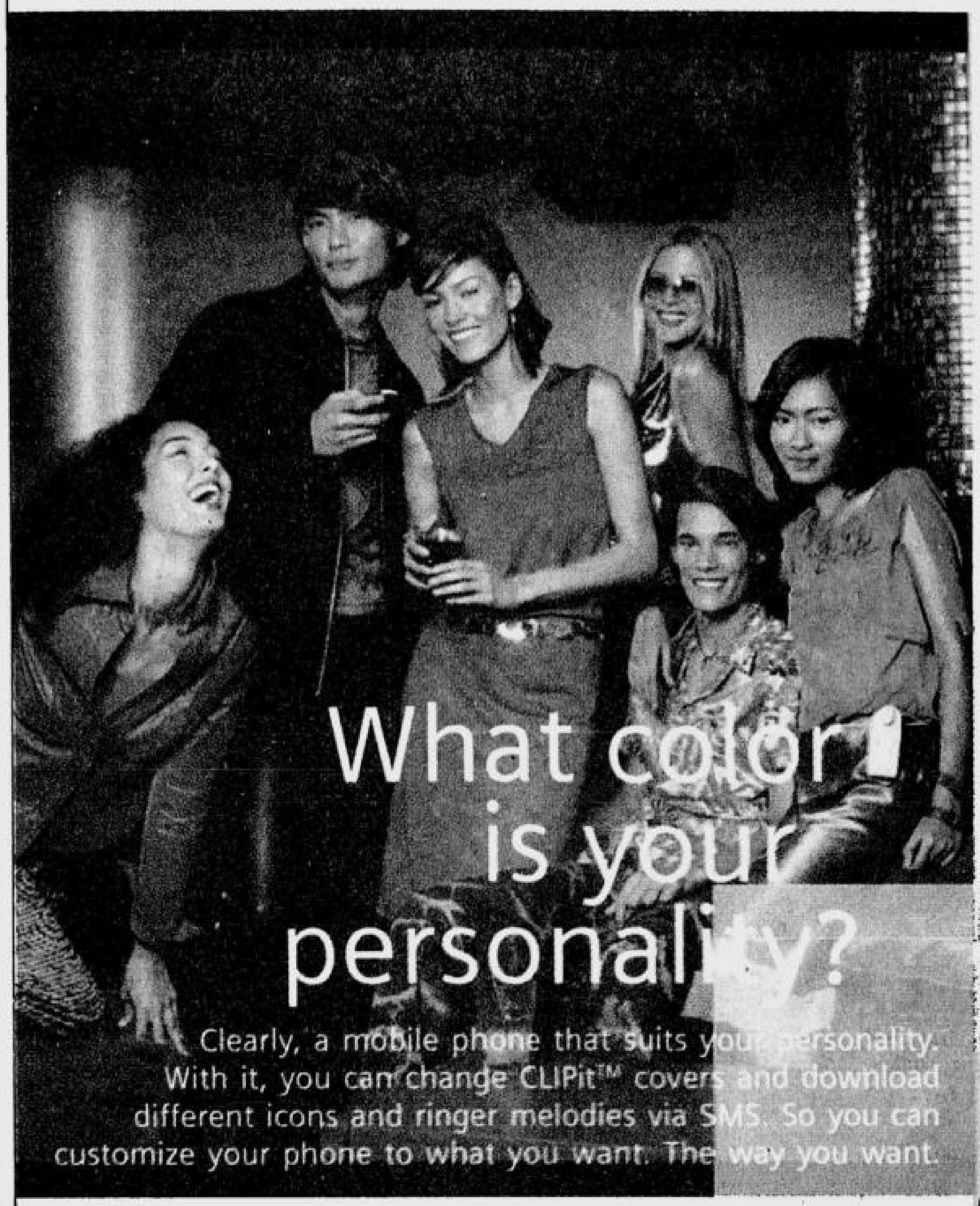
In a large mixing bowl, combine yeast, sugar and lukewarm water. Mix well with a spoon and cover with a sheet of Glad Cling Wrap. Set aside for 10 minutes. After 10 minutes, the yeast should have some scum formation on the surface, similar to beer froth. Otherwise, repeat the "proofing" procedure. To the proofed yeast add the following ingredients—lukewarm milk, egg, egg yolk and melted butter. Mix well with a rubber scraper. Pour in the sugar, the salt and the flour. Mix until soft dough has formed. Transfer the mixture to a bowl.

Form the kneaded dough into a ball and transfer to a greased mixing bowl. Cover with a sheet of Glad Cling Wrap and let rise for 1 hour.

While waiting for the dough to rise, prepare the filling as follows: melt the butter in a frying pan over medium heat. Add apples, walnuts and raisins, and sauté for a few seconds until glossy. Pour in the cinnamon and the sugar and continue to sauté until the apples are tender. This will take about 10 minutes. Set aside to cool completely.

Punch down the dough. Divide the dough into two equal portions. Form into a ball and allow to rest for 5 minutes. Working with a piece at a time, flatten the dough into a rectangle. Using a rolling pin, roll out the dough as thinly as possible. Spread half of the jelly/jam/marmalade all over. Sprinkle half of the apple mixture as evenly as possible. Roll the dough as tightly as possible starting from the long end. Pinch the edges to seal well. Using a sharp knife, slice the roll into two lengthwise. With the cut side up loosely, braid the dough and transfer to the prepared baking pan forming it into a ring. Repeat the procedure with the remaining piece of dough and filling. Loosely cover the dough with a sheet of Glad Cling Wrap. Allow to rise for 30 minutes or until double in bulk. Carefully remove the sheet of plastic wrap right before baking.

Bake at 350°F for 35 minutes. Immediately invert to a rack or large pan and un-mold from the baking pan. When cool, drizzle the top with the prepared glaze. To prepare the glaze, combine the ingredients with a wire whip/rubber scraper and use immediately.



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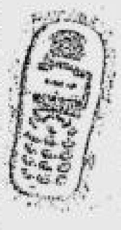
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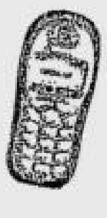
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Henry's brave, new world

(From page D2)

halves) with small balls of homemade ice cream, all in a spun-sugar cage.

All good things must end, for Eggie had to run to her granddaughter's First Communion, and I to my computer to see if words could encapsulate such pleasure.

The layout and interior design of Henry's bears noticing, as well. The designer is Eric Calma—"and family," says Henry, since it involves a family of designers. The special metal tables are not only cleanly linear and eye-pleasing; they have central holes in which one might install a flower vase, or an outdoor umbrella for al fresco dining. Beneath is an unobtrusive bar on which ladies may hang their handbags, out of reach of urban dangers.

Inevitably, although one shouldn't, I cast around in memory for parallel experiences that might explain our delight. Is it like Nobu, where the chef invents from a background of Japanese tradition and the imagination of a cosmopolite?

It is not like anything I know; it is itself, a place where dining pleasures come from a brave new world.

Holiday Postscript

Give your friends and yourself not only food for Christmas, but also the pleasure of music. Two instrumental Christmas CD albums produced by the Jesuit Music Ministry and the Jesuit Communications Foundation feature Arnel Aquino, S.J., at the keyboard, playing Christmas songs traditional and new. "Matins" and "A Lauds Christmas." "Praise God ... with lyre and harp ... with drums and dancing, ... with strings and reeds ... Let everything that breathes praise Yahweh!" (Psalm 150).

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CDO Holiday Ham approx. 1kg w/FREE SMB Premium Rice 5 kg P480* /2's
*P240/kg
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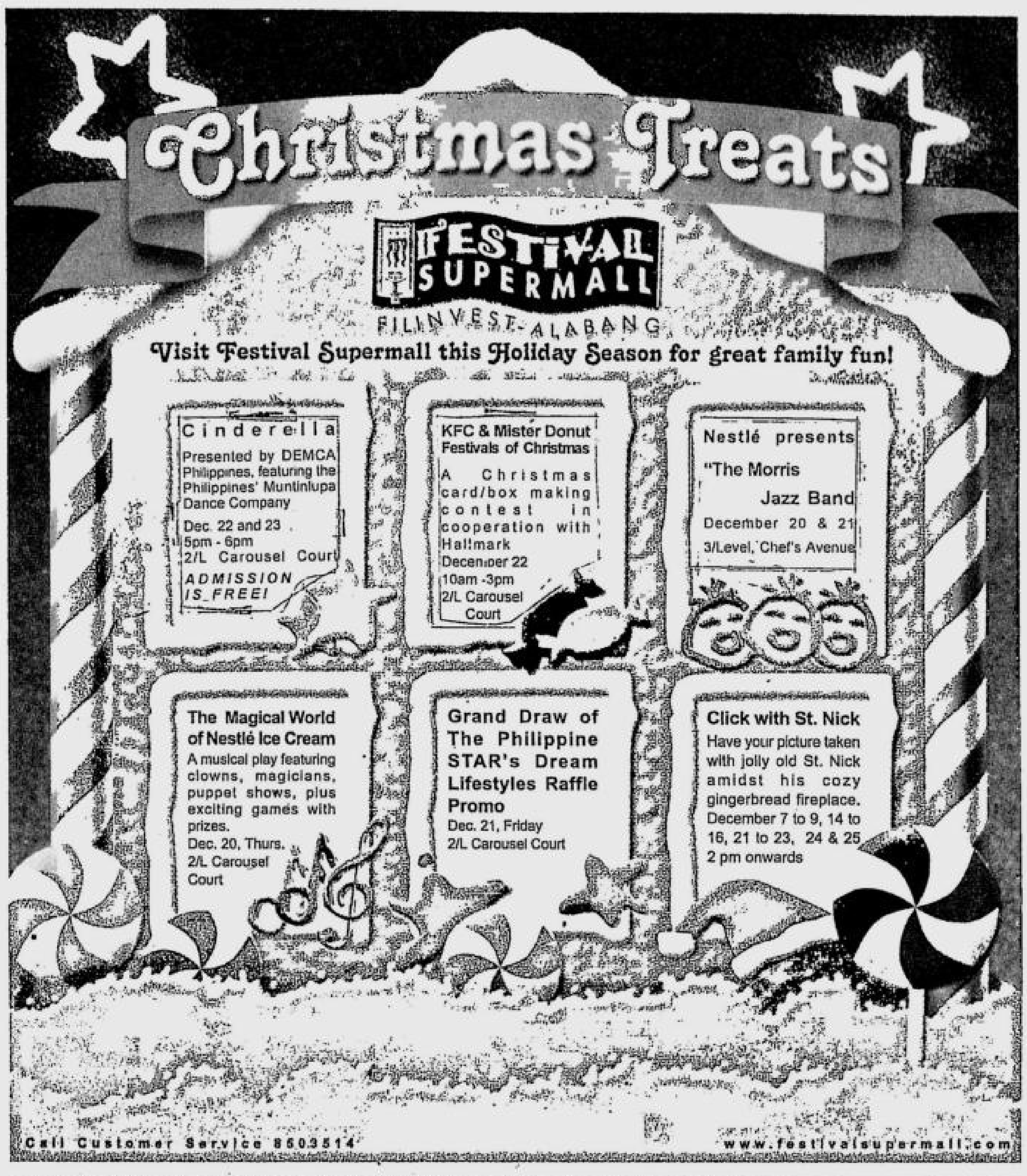
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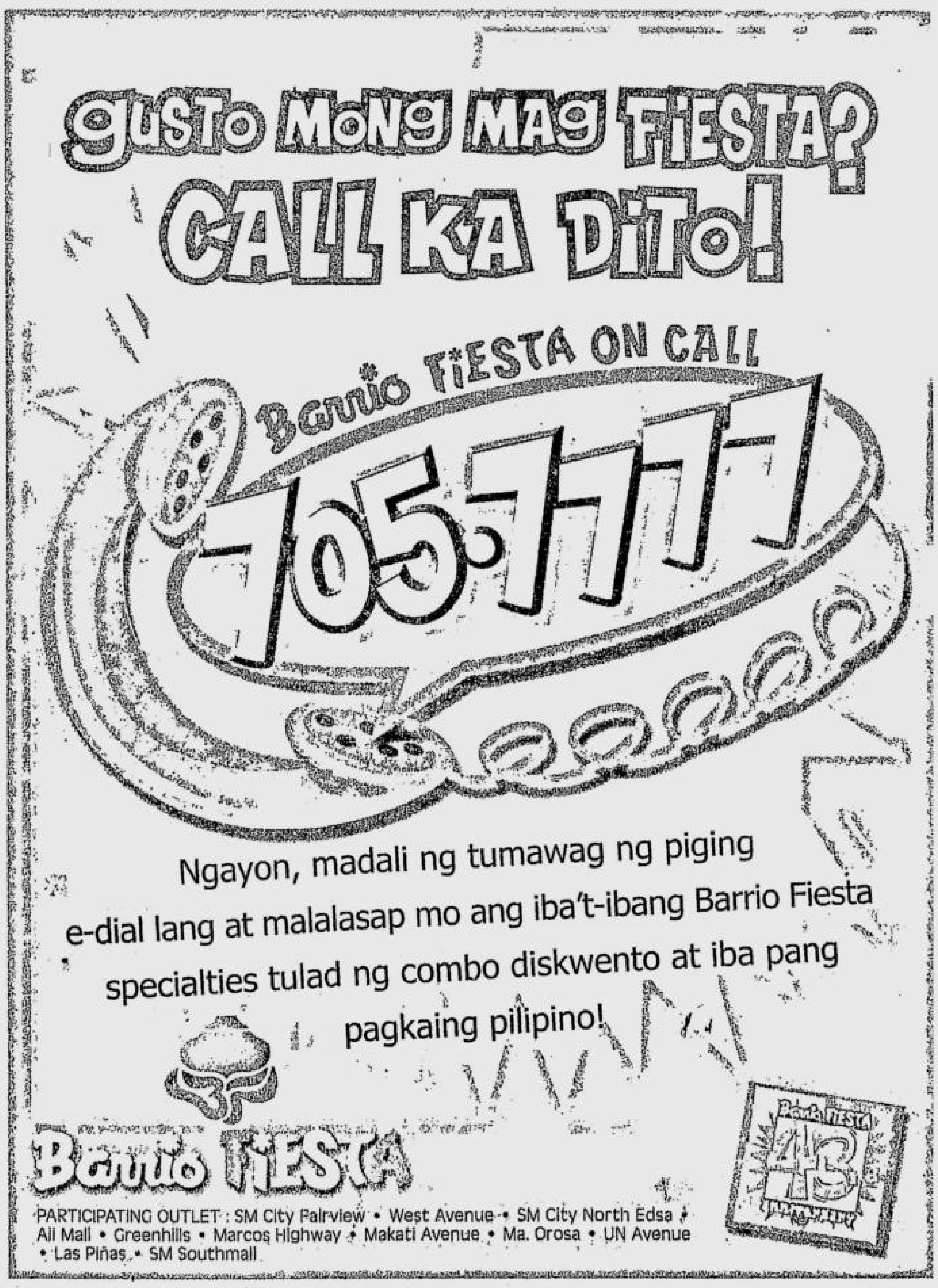
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